

# SERMONS

PREACH'D

Upon several Occasions.

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*The Second Volume.*

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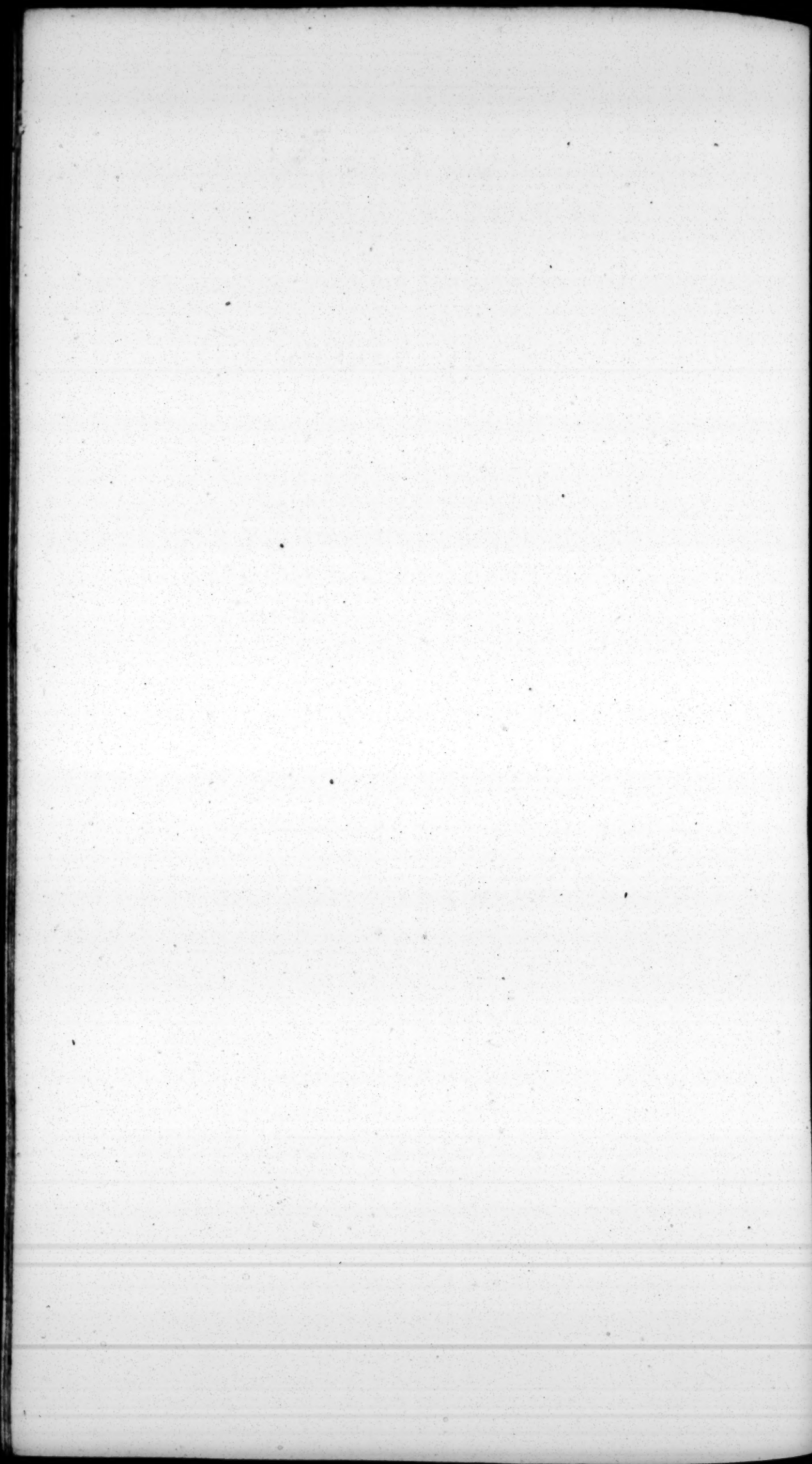
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## SERMON I.

**I**saiah IX. 12, 13. *For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still : For the people turneth not to him that smiteth them, neither do they seek the Lord of Hosts.*

## SERMON II.

Heb. III. 13. *Exhort one another daily while it is called to day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.*

## SERMON III.

I Cor. III. 15. *But he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire.*

## SERMON IV.

Psal. CXIX. 156. *Great peace have they that love thy Law, and nothing shall offend them.*

## SERMON V.

Psal. CXIX. 59. *I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.*



## SERMON VI.

*Psal. CXIX. 60. I made haste, and delayed  
not to keep thy Commandments.*

## SERMON VII.

*I John III. 10. In this the children of God  
are manifest, and the children of the Devil:  
whosoever doth not righteousness is not of  
God.*

## SERMON VIII.

*Luke XV. 7. I say unto you, that likewise  
joy shall be in Heaven over one sinner that  
repenteth, more than over ninety and nine  
just persons which need no repentance.*

## SERMON IX.

*Matth. IX. 31, 32. Wherefore I say unto  
you, all manner of sin and blasphemy shall  
be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy  
against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgi-  
ven unto men.*

*And whosoever speaketh a word against the  
Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: But  
whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost,  
it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this  
world, neither in the world to come.*

## SERMON X.

*Acts. X. 38. ---- Who went about doing good.*  
Isa.

Isa. IX. 12, 13.

*For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still: For the people turneth not unto him that smiteth them, neither do they seek the Lord of Hosts.*

**I**N the former part of this 12th verse, the Prophet threatens that *Israel* should be brought into great distress and set upon by Enemies on every side, the *Syrians* before and the *Philistines* behind, and that they should devour *Israel* with open mouth: And though this was like to be a very fore and dreadfull judgment, yet he foretels that this would not stay God's hand nor satisfy his anger, because he foresaw that they would still grow worse and continue impenitent. *For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still: For the people turneth not unto him that smiteth them, neither do they seek the Lord of Hosts.*



## Sermon First.

In which words there are these two things very usefull at all times, but at this time especially most proper and seasonable for our consideration.

1. *The design and intention of God in sending Judgments upon a People ; and that is to reclaim them from their sins, imply'd in these words, For the People turneth not to him that smiteth them ;* which intimate to us that this is the end which God aims at in his Judgments to take us off from our sins and to bring us to himself.

2. The reason of the continuance of God's Judgments, because the people were not reclaimed by them. And this is fully exprest in the *Text*, that therefore God's anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still, because the people turneth not unto him that smiteth them, &c.

Of these *Two* I crave leave to speak, as plainly and briefly as I can.

1. *The design and intention of God in sending Judgments upon a people ;* And that is to reclaim them from their sins. This indeed is the intention of all God's dispensations towards us in this world. The end of all his mercies and benefits is to take us off from sins, and to oblige and win us to our duty : So the *Apostle* tells us *Rom. 2. 4.*  
That

## Sermon First.

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That the design of God's *goodness and long-suffering and forbearance towards us*, is, *to lead us to Repentance.*

And this is the way wherein God delights to deal with us. The way of Judgment and severity is that which he is more averse from, a course which he unwillingly takes with us and not without some difficulty and reluctancy. *He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men :* And were it not that we are such perverse Creatures as not to be wrought upon by kindness, so wild as not to be tamed by gentle usage, God would not handle us in any other way. It is our obstinacy and intractableness to the methods of his goodness, which constraineth, and almost forceth him against his inclination, to take the Rod into his hand and to chastise us with it. He would draw us with *the cords of love and the bands of a man*, (as he expresseth himself in the *Prophet*) but we will not follow him: And therefore we provoke him to turn these cords into whips, and to change the gentle methods of his kindness into ways of harshness and severity.

And yet when he comes to take this course with us, he still like a kind and tender-hearted Father aims at our benefit



and advantage. He designs kindness to the sons of men by all those Judgments which do not kill them and cut them off from the opportunity and possibility of improving them. If he send evils upon us, it is that thereby he may do us some greater good: If he afflict us, it is not because it is pleasant to him to deal harshly with us, but because it is profitable and necessary for us to be so dealt with: And if at any time he imbitter our lives by miseries and sufferings, it is because he is loth to see us perish in pleasant ways, and chuseth rather to be somewhat severe towards us than suffer us to be utterly undone.

This *Moses* declares to have been the great end of all the severe Providences of God towards the People of *Israel* in their long wandring in the Wilderness, and all the difficulties and hardships they were there exercised withall for the space of forty years, *Deut. 8. 15, 16. Who led thee through that great and terrible Wilderness, wherein were fiery Serpents and Scorpions, &c. That he might humble thee, and that he might prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end.*

So that the afflicting providences of God are not onely apt in their own nature to do us good, but which is a more express argument of the Divine goodness God intends

tends and aims at this end by them: He does not send Judgments upon this Theatre of the World for his sport and pastime, nor set on one part of his Creation to bait another for his own diversion: He does not, like some of the cruel *Roman* Emperours, take pleasure to exercise men with dangers and to see them play bloody prizes before him.

Nay, he does nothing that is severe out of humour and passion, as our earthly Parents many times do. Indeed he is angry with us for our sins, but yet so as still to pity our persons: And when his providence makes use of any sharp and cutting instruments, it is with this mercifull design, to let out our corruption: If he cast us into the Furnace of affliction, it is that he may refine and purifie us from our dross.

So that though the Judgments of God be Evils in themselves, yet considering the intention of God in them they are no real objections against his goodness, but rather arguments for it; as will appear if we consider these *three* things.

1. That the Judgments of God are proper for the cure of a far greater Evil of another kind.

2. They are proper for the prevention of far greater Evils of the same kind.

3. They



3. They are not onely proper to these Ends, but in many cases very necessary.

First, *The Judgments of God are very proper for the cure of a far greater Evil of another kind*; I mean the *Evil of Sin*. We take wrong measures of things, when we Judge those to be the greatest evils which afflict our bodies, wound our reputation, and impoverish our Estates. For those certainly are far the greatest, which affect our noblest part; which vitiate our understandings, and deprave our wills, and wound and defile our souls. What corrupt humours are to the body, that sin is to the souls of men, their disease and their death.

Now it is very agreeable with the goodness and mercy of the Divine providence, to administer to us whatever is proper for the cure of so great an evil. If we make our selves sick, that is our own folly, and no fault of the Physitian; but we are beholden to him if he recover us, though it be by very bitter and unpleasing means. All temporal Judgments which are short of death, are properly medicinal; and if we will but suffer them to have their kindly operation upon us, they will work a cure; and how grievous and distastfull soever they may be for the present, they will  
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prove mercies and blessings in the issue. Upon this account *David* reckons afflictions among the happy blessings of his life, *Psal.* 119. 72. *It is good for me (says he) that I have been afflicted;* And he gives the reason of it in the same *Psal.* ver. 67. *Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I have learnt thy precepts.*

So that though all afflictions are evils in themselves yet they are good for us, because they discover to us our disease and tend to our cure. They are a sensible argument and conviction to us of the evil and danger of sin. We are commonly such fools as *Solomon* speaks of, who *make a mock of sin*; And like Children will be playing with the edge of it till it cut and wound us: We are not sufficiently sensible how great an evil it is till we come to feel the dismal effects and consequences of it. And therefore to rectifie our apprehensions concerning it God makes us to suffer by it. Thus *Elihu* describes to us the happy effect of afflictions upon sinners, *Job* 36. 8, 9, 10. *If they be bound in fetters and held in cords of affliction, then God sheweth them their work and their transgression that they have exceeded. He openeth also their ear to discipline and commandeth that they return from their iniquity.* God doth  
but



but invite and intreat us by his mercies, but his Judgments have a more powerfull and commanding voice. *When he holds men in cords of affliction, then he openeth their ear to discipline.* In prosperity we are many times incapable of counsel and instruction; but when we are under God's correcting hand then are we fit to be spoken withall.

*Secondly,* The Judgments of God are likewise *proper for the preventing of far greater evils of the same kind*; I mean farther punishments. In sending of temporal Judgments upon sinners, God usually proceeds with them by degrees: First he lets fly several single shots at them, and if upon these they will take warning and come in they may prevent the broad-sides and volleys of his wrath.

But the great advantage of all is, that temporal Judgments may prove to us the opportunities of preventing the miserable and unspeakable torments of a long Eternity. For all Judgments which are not final, leaving men a space of Repentance, have in them the mercy of a Reprieve, which by a serious and timely return to God may be improv'd into a Pardon.

Besides, that adversity and afflictions do usually dispose men, and put them into a  
fit



fit temper for Repentance ; They fix our minds and make us serious, and are apt to awaken us to consideration, and suggest to us such thoughts and meditations as these: If temporal evils be so grievous, how insupportable then will be the extreme and endless torments of the next life ? If in this day of God's grace and patience we sometimes meet with such severity, what may we not look for in the day of vengeance ? If these drops of God's wrath which now and then fall upon sinners in this world, fill them with so much anguish and affliction, how deplorably miserable will those wretches be upon whom the storms of his fury shall fall ? Who would venture to continue in sin, when the greatest miseries and calamities which we feel in this life are but a small and inconsiderable earnest of those wofull wages which sinners shall receive in the day of recompence ?

*Thirdly*, The Judgments of God are *not onely proper to these Ends, but in many cases very necessary*. Our condition many times is such as to require this severe way of proceeding, because no other course that God hath taken, or can take with us, will probably do us good. God does not delight in the miseries and calamities of his Creatures but we put him upon these extremities,

tremities, or rather his own goodness and wisdom together do prompt and direct him to these harsh and rigorous ways. May be we have brought our selves into that dangerous state, and the malignity of our distemper is such that it is not to be remov'd without violent Physick, and that cannot be administred to us without making us deadly sick.

So that the Judgments of God which are many times *abroad in the earth* are nothing else but the wise Methods which the great Physitian of the World uses for the cure of Mankind; They are the Rods of his School and the Discipline of his Providence, that *the inhabitants of the world may learn righteousness*; They are a mercifull invention of Heaven to do men that good which many times nothing else will, and to work that blessed effect upon us which neither the wise counsels and admonitions of God's Word nor his milder and gentler dealings with us can usually attain.

Thus we find in the *Parable*, Luk. 15. that the Providence of God makes use of hunger and extreme necessity to bring home the *Prodigal*; and by him our Saviour represents to us the temper of most sinners: For till we have spent that stock  
of



of mercies which God hath given us, till we come to be pinch'd with want and are *ready to perish*, we are not apt to entertain thoughts of *returning to our Father*.

It may be there are some sinners which are more tractable and easie to be reduced to goodness, that are not so headstrong and obstinate in their way but that they may be reclaimed by milder and softer means: But there are likewise a great many senseless and outrageous sinners, who are madly and furiously bent upon their own ruine: Now to treat these fairly, with the allurements of kindness and the gentle arts of perswasion, would be to no purpose: The onely way that is left of dealing with them, is rigour and severity. When sinners are thus besides themselves, something that looks like cruelty is perhaps the greatest mercy that can be shown to them; nothing so proper for such persons as a dark Room, and a spare Diet, and severe Usage; *A Rod for the back of fools*, as the *Wise-man* speaks.

Thus have I done with the *first* thing I propounded to speak to, namely, *The mercifull design and intention, of God in sending Judgments upon a People*, which is to bring them to Repentance, and by Repentance to prevent their Ruine. I proceed to the

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II. *The Reason of the continuance of God's Judgments*, because the people were not reclaimed by them ; therefore *his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still*, because *the people turneth not to him that smiteth them, neither do they seek the Lord of Hosts.*

And how can it be expected it should be otherwise, when incorrigibleness under the Judgments of God is a provocation of so high a nature, a sign of a most deprav'd and incorrigible temper, and an argument of the greatest obstinacy in evil? Upon this account we find that the Holy Spirit of God in *Scripture* brands *Ahaz* as a singular and remarkable sort of sinner, ( *2 Chron. 28. 22.* ) because *in the time of his distress he sinned yet more against the Lord.* The longer *Pharaoh* and the *Egyptians* resisted the Judgments of God the more still they were harden'd, and the more they were plagu'd: *Levit. 26. 22.* after God had there threatned his people with several fore Judgments for their sins, he tells them, that if they *will not be reform'd by all these things* he will *punish them seven times more*, and after that *seven times more for their sins*: And if in such a case the just God will punish seven times more, we may safely conclude that sins after Judgments are seven times greater. So



So likewise *Deut.* 28. after a long and dreadfull Catalogue of Curses there denounc'd against the people of *Israel* in case of their disobedience, God at last threatens them with a forreign *Enemy* that should *distress them in their gates*; And if they would not be reclaim'd by all this he tells them, that he hath still more and greater Judgments for them in store, *v.* 58, & 59. *If thou wilt not observe to do all the words of this law, that thou mayest fear this great and glorious Name THE LORD THY GOD, then the Lord will make thy Plagues wonderfull.* If we be of so strange and monstrous a disposition as to grow worse under Judgments, God will deal with us after an unusual and prodigious manner, he will make our *plagues wonderfull.*

This incorrigible temper the *Prophets* of old every where make the great aggravation of the sin of *Israel*, *Isa.* 1. 4, 5. *Ah sinfull Nation, a people laden with iniquity*; and after a great many other expressions to set forth what heinous sinners they were, he sums up all in this, That they were so far from being reform'd by the several Judgments of God which had been inflicted upon them, that they were the worse for correction; *Why should they be stricken any more? they will revolt more and more.* So

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likewise,

likewise, *Hof. 7. 9, 10. Ephraim*, though brought very low, is represented as of the same refractory temper, *Strangers have devour'd his strength, &c. But they do not return to the Lord, nor seek him for all this.* I will mention but one *Text* more ( and methinks it bears but too near a resemblance with our own condition, both in respect of the Judgments which have been upon us, and our carriage under them ) *Amos 4.* where God upbraids his people several times with this as the great aggravation of their sins, That they continued impenitent under all those terrible Judgments of God which had been upon them; *I have sent among you ( says he ) Famine,* and then *Pestilence*, and then the *Sword*, and last of all a terrible *Fire* which had almost utterly consumed them, *vers. 11. I have overthrown some of you as I overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a fire-brand pluckt out of the burning; yet have ye not return'd unto me.* And because all these Judgments had not been effectual to reclaim them, He tells them that he was resolved to go on in punishing; and therefore he bids them to expect it and prepare themselves for it, *vers. 12. Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel; and because I will doe his unto thee, prepare to meet thy God,*



God, O Israel. When God hath begun to punish a people and they are not amended by it, the honour of his Justice is concern'd to proceed, and not to give over. By every sin that we commit we offend God, but if he smite us, and we stand out against him, then do we contend with him and strive for mastery. And when the sinner is upon these stubborn and insolent terms, then *prepare to meet thy God*; A bitter *Sarcasm*, as if man could be a match for God, and a poor weak creature in any wise able to encounter him to whom Power belongs. There's a severe expression concerning God's dealing with such perverse and obstinate sinners, *Psal. 18. 26. With the froward thou wilt shew thy self froward*, or, as the words may more properly and conveniently be render'd, *with the froward thou wilt wrestle*. God will not be out-brav'd by the sins of men, and therefore if we continue impenitent we have all the reason in the world to expect that God will go on to punish.

But to come nearer to our selves and to consider our own case, which is in truth so very bad that we may almost be afraid to consider it. The wise and good God, like a prudent and indulgent Father, hath used all the arts of his Providence towards this

## Sermon First.

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Nation to reclaim us. He hath invited us to him by many blessings, but we would not come; so (to borrow an apt illustration from a great Divine of our own) we have forced him to deal with us as *Abso- lom* did with *Joab*; he sent one civil mes- sage to him after another, but he would not come; at last he sets on fire his Corn- field to try whether that would bring him: This course God hath taken with us, we would not be perswaded by messages of kindness (by his many blessings and fa- vours) to return to him, and therefore hath he sent amongst us the terrible messen- gers of his wrath. First we were engag'd in a *Foreign War*, and though God was pleas'd to give us some considerable success in it, yet it seems our provocations were so great that he was resolv'd to punish us. He was loth to let us *fall into the hands of men*, and therefore he took the work into his own hand, and punish'd us himself, by sending a *Pestilence* amongst us, the sorest and most destructive that hath befallen this Nation for many Ages. But we did not upon this, re- turn to him, and therefore his fierce anger kindled a fearfull *Fire* amongst us, which hath laid the honour of our Nation, one of the greatest and richest Cities in the World in the dust; and that by so sudden and irre- sistible,



sistible, so dismal and amazing a devastation, as in all the circumstances of it is scarce to be parallel'd in any History.

I doubt not but most of us were mightily affected with this Judgment whilst it was upon us. So astonishing a calamity could not but make us open our eyes a little, and awaken us to consideration; Even the *rich man* in the *Gospel*, though he had all his life-time been immers'd in sensuality, yet could not but *lift up his eyes when he was in flames*.

And surely God expects that such Judgments as these should not onely rouse us a little for the present, but that they should have a permanent operation and effect upon us, and work a thorough and lasting reformation amongst us; but yet I am afraid that this dreadful Fire hath had no other influence upon us but what it uses to have upon Metals, which are onely melted by it for the present but when the Fire is removed they suddenly cool and return to their former hardness.

One would have thought that the sense of such a calamity as this should have remain'd longer upon us. Methinks God seem'd to say to us after this Judgment as he did once to *Jerusalem*, *Zeph. 3. 7. Surely thou wilt fear me, thou wilt receive instruction*; but we (like them) have been but the more forward to provoke him,

(*they rose early and corrupted their doings*) we have after all this, *harden'd our hearts from his fear and refused to return.* And therefore God is now come to one of his last Judgments, *Our Enemy distresseth us in our Gates.* God hath begun to *let us fall into the hands of men,* and by giving our Enemies a sudden and fatal advantage upon us had smitten us with a *Breach great as the Sea.*

These were terrible calamities indeed to come so thick and so swiftly upon us, *like desolation, and as a Whirlwind.* Such a quick succession of Judgments, treading almost upon one anothers heels, does but too plainly declare that God is highly incens'd against us. For surely these are not the wounds of a Friend, but the terrible assaults of an Enemy. They do not look like the displeasure of a Father, but the severity of a Judge, not like *visitation,* but like *vengeance.*

And besides these more visible Judgments upon the Nation, we are by a secret curse of God insensibly decayed in our riches and strength. We are, I know not how, strangely impoverisht in the midst of plenty, and almost undone by victories. And which adds to our misery, few among us seem to be sufficiently sensible of it, or  
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to take any notice by what silent steps and imperceptible degrees (like gray hairs and the infirmities of old age) poverty and weakness are stealing in upon us: so that we may fitly apply to our selves what the Prophet says of *Ephraim, Hos. 7. 9. Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not; yea gray hairs are here and there upon him, and yet he knoweth it not.*

And our condition, as we are a Church, is not much better. How is this famous *Protestant Church* of ours, which was once the *admiration* of her Friends and the envy of her Enemies, sunk and declin'd in her glory, and reduc'd into a very narrow compass? So that she is left like *the Daughter of Sion*, (*Isa. 1. 8.*) *as a Cottage in a Vineyard, as a Lodge in a garden of Cucumbers, as a besieged City*: straitned and hemm'd in on all parts, by the impudence of *Atheism*, the insolencies of *Popery*, and the turbulency of *Faction*; all which do every day visibly and apace gain ground upon her, and distress her on every side; just as the condition of the *Jewish Church* is describ'd before my Text, *The Syrians before, and the Philistines behind, both ready to devour Israel with open mouth.*

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And surely it is not for nothing that God hath brought us thus low, that he hath sent all these Judgments upon us, and that he doth still threaten us with more: The reason is plain, because we are still impenitent; *the people turneth not to him that smiteth them.* There hath been almost an universal degeneracy amongst us, and there is still, I fear, a general impenitency, *the people turneth not*, &c. Notwithstanding all those dismal Calamities which our eyes have seen wickedness doth still prevail in the Nation and overflows it like a mighty deluge, so as to overspread all ranks and Orders of men: And not onely so, but is grown impudent and appears *with a whores forehead*; all kind of modesty seems to have forsaken the sinners of this Age.

And is this Repentance? to live in filthy and abominable lusts, to tear the Name of God by horrid Oaths and Imprecations; to be Atheistical and prophane, and by an unexampled boldness to turn the *Word of God* it self and the gravest and most serious matters of Religion into *Raillery*? This is not *to turn to him that smiteth us*, but to turn upon him and smite him again. And yet such crying and clamorous sins as these are almost



almost come to be the garb and fashion of the Nation, and to be accounted the wit and gallantry of the Age.

And *shall not God visit for these things ? shall not his soul be aveng'd on such a Nation as this ?* Yes, he hath visited ; and 'tis for these things that *the wrath of God* hath been so manifestly *revealed from Heaven* against us. For this cause *misery and destruction* have been *in our way*, and *the way of peace* have we not known, because there hath been *no fear of God before our eyes*. Hence it is that *God's anger is not turned away*, but *his hand is stretched out still*, because *the people turneth not to him that smiteth them*, neither do they seek the Lord of Hosts.

But do not we seek God ? Do we not every day acknowledge our sins to him, and pray that he would have mercy upon us miserable offenders, and grant that we may hereafter live godly righteous and sober lives ? Do not we seek the Lord of Hosts, when we continually beg of him to save and deliver us from the hand of our enemies ? Indeed we do thus seek him, but we should first turn to him ; otherwise if we hope our prayers will prevail with God to do us good we do but trust in lying words. If we go on in our sins our  
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very prayers will *become sin*, and encrease our guilt: For *the prayer of the wicked* (that is, of one that is resolv'd to continue so) *is an abomination to the Lord*. Can we think it reasonable for men to address themselves to God after this manner: *Lord, though we have no mind to turn to thee, yet we pray thee turn away thine anger from us; though we are resolv'd not to forsake our sins, yet we make no doubt but that thy mercy will forgive them: Give peace in our time, O Lord, that we may pursue our lusts securely and without disturbance: deliver us we pray thee from the hands of our Enemies, that we may sin against thee without fear all the days of our lives*. Would it not be horrible impudence and impiety to put up any such petitions to God? And yet this, I fear, is the most genuine interpretation of our prayers and lives compar'd together.

And if this be our case, what can we expect? God may give us peace with our Enemies, but then he will find out some other way to punish us: For if we still persist in our Atheism and Prophaneness, in our contempt of God and of his holy Worship, in our scorn and derision of Religion, in our abominable lusts and horrid impieties, what can we look for but that  
God



God should *be angry with us untill he have consumed us and there be no escaping?* Nothing can be a sadder presage of our ruine, than not to be reform'd by those dreadfull Judgments of God which have been upon us. This was that which brought final destruction upon the *Egyptians* in the *Red Sea*, that they had held out so obstinately against so many Judgments, and had been *hardned under ten plagues*. To be impenitent after such severe corrections, is to poyson our selves with that which is intended for our Physick, and by a *miraculous* kind of obstinacy to turn the *Rods* of God into *Serpents*.

And now perhaps some will be apt to say, That these are things fit for men of our *Profession*, because it is our Trade and we live by it. Indeed they are so, things very fit to be said, and withall very fit for every one to consider, who professeth himself a Christian, and who owns the belief of a God, and a Providence, and another World. And if they be so, where is the fault? Is it, that there is a peculiar Profession of men whose proper work it is to tell men of their faults, and to perswade them to reform? No, there is no harm in that neither. Is it then that they live by their Profession, and yet would be believed? Yes, there lies

lies the force of the objection. To which I shall onely at present return this answer, that men do not argue thus in other cases, where yet the reason seems to be the very same. In matters that concern their *Bodies* and *Estates* the *Physitian* and the *Lawyer* are believ'd, though it is verily thought that they live by their Professions as well as we; why then should men deal so partially and unequally onely with their *Souls*? were we not mov'd by better principles, and sway'd by the arguments and considerations of another World, we might, for ought we know, with every whit as much advantage to our selves suffer men to be quiet and to sleep on securely in their sins; If we did not believe our selves in these matters, what should hinder but that we might with as much gravity and confidence cry Peace, Peace, when there is no Peace; and flatter men with as much art and with as good a grace, as any of those can do who *live delicately and wear soft clothing*?

But we *believe* the threatnings of God, and *therefore do we speak*: We know the *terror* of the Lord, and therefore we endeavour to *perswade men*. And O! that we could perswade them to *break off their sins by righteousness*, and to *turn every one from*  
the



*the evil of his way, and from the violence that is in his hands: And then who can tell but God may turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger that we perish not.*

*The good God make us all wise to know in this our day the things that belong to our peace, before they be hid from our eyes; and grant that we may all turn to him that hath smitten us, by Repentance and real Reformation of our lives; that God may be pleas'd to turn away his Anger from us, and to stretch out his hand for our Deliverance; which we humbly beg of him for the sake of Christ. To whom with the Father, &c.*

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Heb.

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Heb. III. 13.

*Exhort one another daily, while it is called to day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.*

**A**Mong the many considerations which the Word of God and our own Reason offer to us to discourage us from sin this is none of the least considerable, that he that once engages in a vicious course is in danger to proceed in it, being insensibly trained on from one degree of wickedness to another: so that the farther he advanceth his retreat grows more difficult, because he is still pushed on with a greater violence. All error, as well of practice as of judgment, is endless; and when a man is once out of the way, the farther he shall go on the harder he will find it to return into the right way. Therefore there is great reason why men should be so often cautioned  
against



against the beginnings of sin : or if they have been so unhappy as to be engaged in a bad course, why they should be warned to break it off presently and without delay, lest by degrees they be hardened in their wickedness, till their case grow desperate and past remedy. And to this purpose is the *Apostles* advice here in the *Text* ; *Exhort one another daily while it is called to day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.*

From which words I shall

1. Endeavour to represent to you the growing danger of sin, and by what steps and degrees bad habits do insensibly gain upon men and harden them in an evil course.

2. I shall from this consideration take occasion to shew what great reason and need there is to warn men of this danger, and to endeavour to rescue them out of it. And then

3. I shall apply my self to the duty here in the *Text*, of *exhorting* men with all earnestness and importunity to resist the beginnings of sin ; or if they be already entered upon a wicked course, to make haste out of this dangerous state ; *lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.*

I. First,

I. *First*, I shall endeavour to represent to you the growing danger of sin, and by what steps and degrees bad habits do insensibly gain upon men and harden them in an evil course. All the actions of men which are not natural, but proceed from deliberation and choice have something of difficulty in them when we begin to practise them, because at first we are rude and unexercised in that way : but after we have practised them awhile they become more easie ; and when they are easie, we begin to take pleasure in them ; and when they please us we do them frequently, and think we cannot repeat them too often ; and by frequency of acts a thing grows into a habit ; and a confirmed habit is a second kind of nature ; and so far as any thing is natural so far it is necessary, and we can hardly do otherwise ; nay, we do it many times when we do not think of it. For by virtue of a habit a man's mind or body becomes pliable and enclined to such kind of actions as it is accustomed to, and does as it were stand bent and charged such a way ; so that being touched and awakened by the least occasion, it breaks forth into such or such actions. And this is the natural progress of all habits indifferently considered, whether they be good or bad.

But



But vicious habits have a greater advantage, and are of a quicker growth. For the corrupt nature of a man is a rank soil to which vice takes easily, and wherein it thrives apace. The mind of man hath need to be prepared for piety and vertue; it must be cultivated to that end, and ordered with great care and pains: But vices are weeds that grow wild and spring up of themselves. They are in some sort natural to the Soil, and therefore they need not to be planted and watered, 'tis sufficient if they be neglected and let alone. So that vice having this advantage from our nature, it is no wonder if occasion and temptation easily draw it forth.

But that we may take a more distinct account of the progress of sin and by what steps vice gains upon men, I shall mark out to you some of the chief and more observable gradations of it.

I. Men begin with lesser sins. No man is perfectly wicked on the sudden. *Sunt juven. quædam vitiorum elementa; there are certain rudiments of vice,* in which men are first entered, and then they proceed by degrees to greater and fouler crimes. For sin hath its infancy and tender age, and its several states of growth. Men are not so totally degenerate but at first they are ashamed

shamed when they venture upon a known sin, though it be but small in comparison. Hence it is that at first men are very solicitous to palliate and hide their faults by excuses, but after they have frequently committed them, and they grow too visible to be concealed, then they will attempt to defend and maintain them; and from thence they come by degrees to take pleasure in them, and in those that do the same things.

2. After men have been sometime initiated in these lesser sins, by the commission of these they are prepared and disposed for greater; such as lay waste the conscience, and offer more violence to the light and reason of their minds. By degrees a sinner may grow to be so hardy as to attempt those crimes which at first he could not have had the thought of committing without horror. Like *Hazael*, who when he was told by the Prophet *Elisha* what barbarous cruelties he should one day be guilty of towards the people of *Israel* when he should come to be King of *Syria*, he abominated the very thought and mention of them; *Is thy servant a dog that he should do this great thing?* and yet for all this we know he did it afterward. 'Tis true indeed when a sinner is first tempted



ted to the commission of a more gross and notorious sin his conscience is apt to boggle and start at it, he doth it with great difficulty and regret; the terrours of his own mind and the fears of damnation are very troublesome to him: But this trouble wears off by degrees, and that which was at first difficult does by frequent practice and long custome become tolerable.

3. When a man hath proceeded thus far he begins to put off shame, one of the greatest restraints from sin which God hath laid upon humane nature. And when this curb once falls off, there is then but little left to restrain and hold us in. At first setting out upon a vicious course men are a little nice and delicate, like young Travellers, who at first are offended at every speck of dirt that lights upon them; but after they have been accustomed to it, and have travelled a good while in foul ways, it ceaseth to be troublesome to them to be dashed and bespattered.

4. After this, it is possible, men may come to approve their vices. For if mens Judgments do not command their wills and restrain their lusts, it is great odds in process of time the vicious inclinations of their Wills will put a false byass upon their Judgments; And then it is no wonder if

men come to boast of their sins and to glory in their vices, when they are half persuaded that they are generous and commendable qualities. Thus much is certain in experience, that some men have gotten so perfect a habit of some sins as not to know and take notice many times when they commit them. As in the case of swearing, which some men have so accustomed themselves to that without any consideration they do of course put an oath or two into every sentence that comes from them. And it hath been observed of some persons that they have told an untruth so often, and averr'd it with so much confidence, till at last, forgetting that it was a lie at first, they themselves have in process of time believed it to be true.

5. From this pitch of wickedness men commonly proceed to draw in others and to make proselytes to their vices. Now this signifies not only a great approbation of sin but even a fondness for it, when men are not content to sin upon their own single accounts, but they must turn zealous agents and factors for the Devil; become *teachers* of sin and *ministers of unrighteousness*, and are factiously concerned to propagate together with their Atheistical principles their lewd practices, and to draw



draw Followers and Disciples after them.

And when they are arrived to this height it is natural for them to hate reproof, and to resist the means of their recovery ; to quarrel against all the remedies that shall be offered to them, and to count those their greatest enemies who have so much courage and kindness as to deal plainly with them, and to tell them the truth. And then all the wise counsels of God's Word, and the most gentle and prudent admonitions in the world , when they are tendered to such persons, serve only to provoke their scorn or their passion. And surely that man is in a sad case that is so disposed, that in all probability he will turn the most effectual means of his amendment into the occasion of new and greater sins.

But that which renders the condition of such persons much more sad and deplorable is, that all this while God is withdrawing his grace from them. For every degree of sin causeth the Holy Spirit of God with all his blessed motions and assistances to retire farther from them : And not only so, but the Devil (that evil *Spirit* which the *Scripture* tells us, *works effectually in the children of disobedience*) does according as men improve in wickedness

get a greater and a more establish'd dominion over them. For as they who are reclaimed from an evil course are said in Scripture to be *rescued out of the snare of the Devil*, and to be *turned from the power of Satan unto God*; so on the other hand, the farther men advance in the ways of sin, so much the farther they depart from God, from under the influence of his grace, and the care of his protection and providence; and they give the Devil, (who is not apt to neglect his advantages upon them) greater opportunities every day to gain the firmer possession of them.

And thus by passing from one degree of sin to another, the sinner becomes hardened in his wickedness and does insensibly slide into that in which without a miraculous grace of God he is like for ever to continue. For the mind of man, after it hath been long accustomed to evil, and is once grown old in vice, is almost as hard to be rectified as it is to recover a body bowed down with age to its first straightness. The *Scripture* speaks of some that *commit sin with greediness*, and that *drink up iniquity as the Ox drinketh up water*, with a mighty appetite and thirst as if they were not able to refrain from it. And to express to us the miserable condition of such



such persons it representeth them as perfect slaves to their vices, that have *sold* themselves to do wickedness and *are led captive by Satan at his pleasure*. And when men have brought themselves to this pass, they are almost under a fatal necessity of sinning on. I do not believe that God hath absolutely predestinated any man to ruine, but by a long course of wilfull sins men may in a sort predestinate themselves to it, and chuse wickedness so long till it almost becomes necessary, and till they have brought themselves under all imaginable disadvantages of contributing any thing towards their own recovery; being bound in the chains of their own wickedness and held in the cords of their sins: Nay, like *Sampson*, not only bound by those lusts which they have embraced, but likewise robbed of all their strength whereby they should break loose from those bonds. God grant that none of us may ever have the wofull experience of it: But I am horribly afraid it is too true, that a sinner may arrive to that confirmed state of impiety as almost totally to lose his liberty to do better: He may attain to that perfection in vice, as to continue to be a bad man upon the same account that the *Historian* extravagantly says *Cato* was virtuous,

## Sermon Second.

tuous, *Quia aliter esse non po-*  
*Vell. Patere.* *tuit ; because he could not be o-*  
*therwise. Can the Ethiopian*  
*change his skin, or the Leopard his spots?*  
 It is the *Scripture-compariſon*, to ſet forth  
 to us how hard a thing it is for a man to  
 be brought to goodneſs that hath been long  
 accuſtomed to do evil. He that is thus  
 deeply engaged and entangled in a bad  
 courſe will ſcarce ever have the Heart and  
 reſolution to break looſe from it, unleſs  
 he be forced violently out of it by ſome  
 ſevere affliction, by a ſharp ſickneſs, or  
 by a terrible calamity, or by the preſent  
 apprehenſions of death and the terrours of  
 a future Judgment. Nor will theſe be ef-  
 fectual neither to change ſuch a perſon,  
 without an extraordinary degree of God's  
 grace ; which conſidering the greatneſs  
 and the continuance of his provocations,  
 he hath very little reaſon to expect or  
 hope God ſhould ever beſtow upon him.  
 Wretched man ! that haſt brought thy  
 ſelf into this miſerable ſtate, out of which  
 there is but juſt a poſſibility left of thy  
 being reſcued ; that haſt neglected thy di-  
 ſeaſe ſo long till it is almoſt too late to ap-  
 ply remedies ; that haſt provoked God ſo  
 far and ſinned to ſuch a prodigious height,  
 that thou haſt reaſon almoſt to deſpair both  
 of



of his grace and assistance for thy repentance, and of his mercy for thy pardon. I speak not this to discourage even the greatest of sinners from repentance. Though their case be extremely difficult, yet it is not quite desperate. For *those things which seem impossible with men, are possible with God.* But I speak it on purpose to stop sinners in their course and to discourage men from going on in sin till they be hardened through the deceitfulness of it, and have brought themselves by insensible degrees into that dangerous and difficult state which I have all this while been representing to you. I come now to the

II. *Second* thing I propounded, which was from this consideration to shew what great reason and need there is to warn men of this danger, and to endeavour to rescue them out of it. The *Apostle* directs this precept to all Christians. *Exhort one another daily, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.* That is, lest you be hardened by degrees and finally ruined. And surely every man is concerned to do what in him lies to rescue his brother from so imminent a danger; It is every ones place and duty to endeavour to save those whom he sees ready

dy to perish, much more does it concern those who are peculiarly set apart for this work, I mean the Ministers of God's holy Word, whose proper office and business it is to *exhort and warn every man day and night*, who are *set as watchmen to the house of Israel*, and whose blood in case any of them miscarry through our neglect *shall be required at our hands*. So that if we believe the threatnings of God which we declare to others, if we have any apprehension of the dreadful misery of another world, if we have any sense of our own duty and safety, if we have any pity for perishing souls, we cannot but be very importunate with sinners to look about them, and to consider their danger, and to bethink themselves seriously of the miserable event and issue of a wicked life : We cannot but be earnest with them to *break off their sins, and to give glory to God by repentance, before darkness come and their feet stumble upon the dark mountains*. When we are convinced more fully than we can desire that *misery and destruction are in their ways*, when we plainly see the *evil day* halting toward them apace and *destruction coming upon them like a Whirlwind*; heaven above threatening them, and hell beneath moving her self to meet them at their coming,



coming, can we possibly do less than to warn such persons to *flee from the wrath which is to come*, and out of a sad apprehension of the danger that hangs over them, to caution them against it, and endeavour with all our might to rescue them from the misery which is ready to swallow them up? Indeed one would be apt to think it a very vain thing to dissuade men from being miserable, to use great vehemency of argument to hinder a man from leaping into a pit, or from running into the fire; to take great pains to argue a sick man into a desire of health, and to make a prisoner contented to have his shackles knocked off, and to be set at liberty; one would think all this were perfectly needless: But yet we see in experience sin is a thing of so stupifying a nature as to make men insensible of their danger, although it be so near, and so terrible. It is not so with men in other cases: When we labour of any bodily distemper, it is much to find a man that is patient of his disease; but when our souls are mortally sick, that we should be contented with our condition, and fond of our disease, that we should fight with our Physician, and spurn at our remedy; this surely is the height of distraction, for men  
to.

to be thus absolutely bent upon their own ruine, and to resolve to make away themselves for ever. And we who are the Messengers of God to Men must be born of the rocks, and have hearts *harder than the nether milstone*, if we can patiently look on and endure to see men perish without using our utmost endeavour to save them. Therefore I shall in the

III. *Third* and *last* place apply my self to this work of *Exhortation*, the duty commanded here in the Text. And here I shall address my self to *two* sorts of persons :

1. To perswade those who are yet innocent of great crimes to resist the beginnings of sin, lest it gain upon them by degrees.

2. To press and urge those that are already entred upon a wicked course, that they would make haste out of this dangerous state ; *lest at last they be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.*

1. To perswade those who are yet in some measure innocent to resist the beginnings of sin, lest it gain upon them by degrees. Vice may easily be discouraged at first.

'Tis



'Tis like a slight disease, which is easie to be cured, but dangerous to be neglected. The first approaches of sin and temptation are usually very modest, but if they be not discountenanced they will soon grow upon us and make bolder attempts. Every inclination to sin, every compliance with temptation is a going down the hill: While we keep our standing we may command our selves, but if we once put our selves into violent motion downward we cannot stop when we please.

*Omne in præcipiti vitium stetit -----*

*All Vice stands upon a Precipice*, and to engage in any sinful course is to run down the hill. And if we once let loose the propensions of our nature we cannot gather in the reins and govern them as we please: If we give way to *presumptuous sins* they will quickly get *dominion over us*. It is much easier not to begin a bad course than to put a stop to our selves after we have begun it. *Stulta res est nequitiae modus*, 'Tis a fond thing for a man to think *Seneca.* to set bounds to himself in any thing that is bad, to resolve to sin in number, weight and measure, with great temperance and discretion, and government of himself: that

that he will commit this sin, and then give over, entertain but this one temptation, and after that he will shut the door and admit of no more. Our corrupt hearts when they are once in motion, they are like the raging Sea, to which we can set no bounds, nor say to it *hitherto thou shalt go and no further*. Sin is very cunning and deceitfull, and does strangely gain upon men when they once give way to it. It is of a very bewitching nature, and hath strange arts of address and insinuation: The giving the way to a small sin does marvellously prepare and dispose a man for a greater: By giving way to one little vice after another the strongest resolution may be broken. For though it be not to be snapt in sunder at once, yet by this means it is untwisted by degrees, and then 'tis easie to break it one thread after another. 'Tis scarce imaginable of what force one sinfull action is to produce more: For sin is very teeming and fruitfull; and though there be no *blessing* annexed to it yet it does strangely *encrease and multiply*. As there is a connexion of one vertue with another, so vices are linkt together, and one sin draws many after it. When the Devil tempts a man to commit any wickedness he does as it were lay a long train of sins  
and



and if the first temptation take, they give fire to one another. Let us then resist the beginnings of sin because then we have most power, and sin hath least. This is the *first*.

2. To perswade those who are already engaged in a wicked course; to make haste out of this dangerous state. And there is no other way to get out of it but by repentance, that is, by a real change and reformation of our lives; for herein the nature of true repentance does consist. And without this all the devices which men use to get rid of the guilt of their sins are vain and to no purpose. 'Tis not to be done by a formal confession and absolution, nor by a long pilgrimage, nor by one of those little Tickets from *Rome* which they call *Indulgences*. A wise man would much sooner perswade himself that God would not at all punish the sins of men, than that he would forgive them so easily, and receive great offenders to favour upon such slight terms. Let us not deceive our selves, there is one plain way to Heaven, by sincere repentance and a holy life, and there is no getting thither by tricks. And without this change of our lives all our sorrow and fasting and humiliation for sin, which at this season we  
make

make profession of, will signifie nothing. There is an excellent passage of the Son of *Sirach* to this purpose, *Eccles.* 34. 25, 26. *He that washeth himself after the touching of a dead body, if he touch it again what availeth his washing? So is it with a man that fasteth for his sins, and goeth again and doth the same things, who will hear his prayer, or what doth his humbling profit him?* There is this plain difference between trouble for sin and repentance; sorrow onely respects sins past, but repentance is chiefly preventive of sins for the future: And God therefore requires that we should be troubled for our sins, that we may resolve to leave them.

And to oblige us to a vigorous and speedy resolution in this matter, let us consider that we have engaged too far already in a bad course; and that every day our retreat will grow more dangerous and difficult; that by our delays we make work for a sadder and longer repentance than that which we do now so studiously decline: Let us consider likewise, that our life is concerned in the case; that *except we repent and turn, we shall die*: And that the evil day may overtake us while we are deliberating whether we should avoid it or not; that vice is so far from being mortified



fied by age, that by every days continuance in it we encrease the power of it; and so much strength as we add to our disease we certainly take from our selves: And this is a double weakning of us, when we do not onely lose our own strength, but the enemy gets it and imployes it against us. The deceitfulness of sin appears in nothing more than in keeping men off from this necessary work, and perswading them to hazard all upon the unreasonable hopes of the mercy of God, and the uncertain resolution of a future repentance. I do not think there are any here but do either believe, or at least are vehemently afraid that there is another life after this; and that a wicked life, without repentance, must unavoidably make them miserable in another world; and that to cast off all to a death-bed repentance, puts things upon a mighty hazard. And they have a great deal of reason to think so: For alas, how unfit are most men at such a time for so great and serious a work as repentance is, when they are unfit for the smallest matters: And how hard is it for any man, then to be assured of the truth and reality of his repentance, when there is no sufficient opportunity to make trial of the sincerity of it. I deny not the possibility of

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the thing; but it is much to be feared that the repentance of a dying sinner is usually but like the sorrow of a malefactor, when he is ready to be turned off; he is not troubled that he hath offended the Law, but he is troubled that he must die. For when death is ready to seize upon the sinner, and he feels himself dropping into destruction, no wonder if then the man's stomach come down, and he be contented to be saved; and seeing he must stay no longer in this world, be desirous to go to Heaven rather than Hell; and in order to that, be ready to give some testimonies of his repentance: no wonder if when the rack is before him this extort confession from him, and if in hopes of a pardon he make many large promises of amendment, and freely declare his resolution of a new and better life. But then it is the hardest thing in the world to judge whether any thing of all this that is done under so great a fear and force be real. For a sick man as he hath lost his appetite to the most pleasant meats and drinks, so likewise his sinfull pleasures and fleshly lusts are at the same time nauseous to him, and for the very same reason: For sickness having altered the temper of his body, he hath not at that time any gust or relish for these things.



things. And now he is resolved against sin, just as a man that hath no stomach is resolved against meat. But if the fit were over, and death would but raise his siege and remove his quarters a little farther from him, it is to be feared that his former appetite would soon return to him, and that he would sin with the same eagerness he did before. Besides, how can we expect that God should accept of his repentance at such a time, when we are conscious to our selves that we did resolve to put off our repentance till we could sin no longer? Can we think it fit for any man to say thus to God in a dying hour; "Lord, now the world leaves me, I come to thee. I pray thee give me eternal life, who could never afford to give thee one good day of my life: Grant that I may live with thee and enjoy thee for ever, who could never endure to think upon thee. I must confess that I could never be perswaded to leave my sins out of love to thee, but now I repent of them for fear of thee: I am conscious to my self that I would never do any thing for thy sake, but yet I hope thy goodness is such that thou wilt forgive all the ungodliness and unrighteousness of my life, and accept of this forced submission

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" which

“ which I now make to thee. I pray thee  
“ do not at last frustrate and disappoint  
“ me in this design which I have laid, of  
“ sinning while I live and getting to hea-  
“ ven when I die. Surely no man can  
think it fit to say thus to God; and yet I  
am afraid this is the true interpretation of  
many a man’s repentance who hath defer’d  
it till he comes to die. I do not speak this  
to discourage repentance, even at that time.  
It is always the best thing we can do. But  
I would by all means discourage men from  
putting off so necessary a work till then.  
’Tis true indeed when ’tis come to this,  
and a sinner finds himself going out of the  
world, if he have been so foolish and so  
cruel to himself as to put things upon this  
last hazard, repentance is now the onely  
thing that is left for him to do; this is his  
last remedy and the onely refuge he has  
to flye to: And this is that which the Mi-  
nister in this case ought by all means to  
put the man upon, and earnestly to per-  
swade him to. But when we speak to men  
in other circumstances, that are well and  
in health, we dare not for all the world  
encourage them to venture their souls up-  
on such an uncertainty. For to speak the  
best of it, it is a very dangerous remedy,  
especially when men have designedly con-  
triv’d



triv'd to rob God of the service of their best days, and to put him off with a few unprofitable sighs and tears at the hour of death. I desire to have as large apprehensions of the mercy of God as any man, but withall, I am very sure that he is the hardest to be imposed upon of any one in the world. And no man that hath any worthy apprehensions of the Deity can imagine him to be so easie, as to forgive men upon the least word and intimation of their minds, and to have such a fondness for offenders as would reflect upon the prudence of any Magistrate and Governour upon earth. God grant that I may sincerely endeavour to live a holy and vertuous life, and may have the comfort of that when I come to die: And that I may never be so unwise as to venture all my hopes of a blessed eternity upon a death-bed repentance.

I will conclude all with those excellent sayings of the Son of Sirach (Eccles. 5. 6, 7. 16. 11, 12. 18. 21, 22. *Say not, God's mercy is great, and he will be pacified for the multitude of my sins. For mercy and wrath is with him; he is mighty to forgive, and to pour out displeasure: And as his mercy is great, so are his corrections also. Therefore make no tarrying to turn to the*

## Sermon Second.

Lord, and put not off from day to day: For suddenly shall the wrath of the Lord come forth, and in thy security thou shalt be destroyed. Humble thyself before thou be sick, and in the time of sins shew repentance. Let nothing hinder thee to pay thy vows in due time, and defer not till death to be justified.

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I Cor,

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I Cor. III. 15.

*But he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire.*

**T**He Context is thus. According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise Master-builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon: but let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay, than that which is laid, Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation, gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble, every mans work shall be made manifest, for the day shall declare it; because it shall be revealed by fire, and the fire shall try every mans work of what sort it is. If any mans work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any mans work shall be burnt, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire.

In these Words the Apostle speaks of a sort of persons, who held indeed the foundation of *Christianity*, but built upon it such *doctrines* or *practices* as would not bear the *trial*; which he expresses to us by *wood, hay, and stubble*, which are not *proof* against the *fire*. Such a person, the Apostle tells us, hath brought himself into a very dangerous state, though he would not deny the possibility of his salvation; *He himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire.*

That by *fire* here is not meant the fire of *Purgatory*, as some pretend (who would be glad of any shadow of a Text of Scripture to countenance their own dreams) I shall neither trouble you nor my self to manifest; since the *particle* of similitude [*as*] plainly shews that the Apostle did not intend an escape out of the fire *literally*, but like to that which men make out of a house or Town that is on fire. Especially since very learned persons of the Church of *Rome* do acknowledge that *Purgatory* cannot be concluded from this *Text*, nay all that *Estius* contends for from this *place* is, that it cannot be concluded from hence that there is no *Purgatory*; which we never pretended, but onely that this Text does not prove it,



It is very well known that this is a Proverbial phrase used not onely in Scripture, but in prophane Authors to signifie a *narrow escape out of a great danger*. He shall be saved, yet so as by fire, *διὰ πυρός, out of the fire*. Just as *δι' ὑδάτος* is used 1 Pet. 3. 20. where the Apostle speaking of the eight persons of Noah's family who escap'd the flood, *διὰ τῶν ὑδάτων δι' ὑδάτος*, they escaped out of the water. So here this phrase is to be rendred in the Text, *he himself shall escape, yet so as out of the fire*. The like expression you have, Amos 4. 11. *I have pluckt them as a firebrand out of the fire*. And Jude 23. *Others save with fear, plucking them out of the fire*. All which expressions signifie the greatness of the danger and the difficulty of escaping it; as one who when his house at midnight is set on fire, and being suddenly wak'd leaps out of his bed, and runs naked out of the doors, taking nothing that is within along with him, but imploying his whole care to save his body from the flames, as St. Chrysostome upon another occasion expresseth it. And so the Roman Orator \* (who, it is likely did not \* Tully. think of Purgatory) useth this phrase; *Quo ex judicio, velut ex incendio, nudus effugit*; From which Judgment or Sentence he escaped naked, as it were out of a burning.

And

† *Aristides.*

And one of the Greek Orators † tells us, That to save a man out of the fire, was a common proverbial speech.

From the words thus explained, the Observation that naturally ariseth is this, *That men may hold all the Fundamentals of Christian Religion, and yet may superadd other things whereby they may greatly endanger their salvation.* What those things were which some among the *Corinthians* built upon the foundation of Christianity, whereby they endanger'd their Salvation, we may probably conjecture by what the Apostle reproves in this Epistle, as the tolerating of *incestuous marriages*, communicating in *Idol feasts*, &c. And especially by the doctrine of the false Apostles, who at that time did so much disturb the peace of most Christian Churches, and who are so often and so severely reflected upon in this Epistle. And what their *Doctrine* was, we have an account *Acts 15. viz.* that they imposed upon the *Gentile Christians Circumcision, and the observation of the Jewish Law*, teaching that *unless they were circumcised, and kept the Law of Moses, they could not be saved.* So that they did not onely build these doctrines upon *Christianity*, but they made them equal with the *Foundation*, saying, that *unless*  
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men believed and practised such things they could not be saved.

In speaking to this *Observation*, I shall reduce my discourse to these two Heads.

1. I shall present to you some *Doctrines* and *Practices* which have been built upon the *Foundation of Christianity*, to the great hazard and danger of mens *salvation*. And to be plain, I mean particularly the Church of *Rome*.

2. I shall enquire, whether our granting a *possibility* of salvation (though with great hazard) to those in the communion of the *Roman Church*, and their denying it to us, be a reasonable argument and encouragement to any man to betake himself to that Church.

And there is the more reason to consider these things, when so many *seducing Spirits* are so active and busie to pervert men from the *truth*; and when we see every day so many men and their *Religion* so easily parted. For this reason these two Considerations shall be the subject of the following discourse.

I. *First*. We will consider some *Doctrines* and *Practices* which the Church of *Rome* hath built upon the *foundation of Christianity*, to the great hazard and danger

ger of mens *salvation*. It is not denied by the most judicious *Protestants*, but that the Church of *Rome* do hold all the Articles of the Christian Faith which are necessary to salvation. But that which we charge upon them, as a just ground of our separation from them, is, *the imposing of new Doctrines and Practices upon Christians as necessary to salvation*, which were never taught by our Saviour, or his Apostles; and which are either directly contrary to the doctrine of Christianity, or too apparently destructive of a good life. And I begin,

I. With their *Doctrines*. And because I have no mind to aggravate lesser matters, I will single out four or five points of Doctrine, which they have added to the Christian Religion, and which were neither taught by our Saviour and his Apostles, nor own'd in the first Ages of Christianity. And the

First which I shall mention, and which being once admitted makes way for as many errours as they please to bring in, is *their Doctrine of Infallibility*. And this they are very stiff and peremptory in, though they are not agreed among themselves where this *Infallibility* is seated; whether in the *Pope alone*, or a *Council alone*,



lone, or in both together, or in the *diffusive* body of *Christians*. But they are sure they have it, though they know not where it is.

And is this no prejudice against it? can any man think that this *priviledge* was at first conferred upon the Church of *Rome*, and that *Christians* in all Ages did believe it, and had constant recourse to it for determining their differences, and yet that that very Church which hath enjoyed and used it so long should now be at a loss where to find it? Nothing could have fallen out more unluckily, than that there should be such differences among them about that which they pretend to be the onely means of ending all differences.

There is not the least intimation in Scripture of this *priviledge* conferr'd upon the *Roman* Church, nor do the Apostles, in all their Epistles, ever so much as give the least direction to *Christians* to appeal to the Bishop of *Rome* for a determination of the many differences which even in those times happen'd among them. And it is strange they should be so silent in this matter, when there were so many occasions to speak of it, if our Saviour had plainly appointed such an *infallible Judge* of controversies for this very end to decide

cide the differences that should happen among Christians. It is strange that the *ancient Fathers* in their disputes with Hereticks should never appeal to this *Judge*; nay, it is strange they should not constantly do it in all cases, it being so short and expedite a way for the ending of controversies. And this very consideration to a wise man is instead of a thousand arguments to satisfy him that in those times no such thing was believed in the world.

Now this *Doctrine of infallibility*, if it be not true, is of so much the more pernicious consequence to Christianity, because the conceit of it does confirm them that think they have it in all their other errors; and gives them a pretence of assuming an Authority to themselves to impose their own fancies and mistakes upon the whole Christian world.

2. Their *Doctrine* about *Repentance*, which consists in confessing their sins to the Priest; which if it be but accompanied with any degree of *contrition* does upon *absolution* received from the Priest put them into a state of *salvation*, though they have lived the most lewd and debauched lives that can be imagin'd; than which nothing can be more plainly destructive of a good life. For if this be true,



### Sermon Third.

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true, all the hazard that the most wicked man runs of his salvation is onely the danger of so *sudden a death* as gives him no space for confession and absolution. A case that happens so rarely, that any man that is strongly addicted to his lusts will be content to venture his salvation upon this hazard; and all the arguments to a good life will be very insignificant to a man that hath a mind to be wicked, when remission of sins may be had upon such cheap terms.

3. The *Doctrine of Purgatory*; By which they mean a estate of temporary punishments after this life, from which men may be released and translated into Heaven by the prayers of the living, and the sacrifice of the *Mass*. That this Doctrine was not known in the primitive Church, nor can be proved from Scripture, we have the free acknowledgment of as learned and eminent men as any of that Church; which is to acknowledge that it is a superstructure upon the Christian Religion. And though in one sense it be indeed a building of *gold and silver* upon the foundation of Christianity, considering the vast revenues which this Doctrine (and that of *Indulgences*, which depends upon it) brings into that Church; yet I doubt not,

not, but in the Apostles sense, it will be found to be *hay* and *stubble*. But how groundless so ever it be, it is too gainfull a Doctrine to be easily parted withall.

4. The *Doctrine of Transubstantiation*. A hard word, but I would to God that were the worst of it; the *thing* is much more difficult. I have taken some pains to consider other Religions that have been in the world, and I must freely declare, that I never yet in any of them met with any Article or Proposition, imposed upon the belief of men, half so unreasonable and hard to be believed as this is: And yet this in the *Romish Church* is esteemed one of the most principal Articles of the Christian Faith; though there is no more certain foundation for it in Scripture, than for our Saviour's being substantially changed into all those things which are said of him, as that he is a *rock*, a *vine*, a *door*, and a hundred other things.

But this is not all. This Doctrine hath not onely *no certain Foundation* in Scripture, but I have a far heavier charge against it, namely, that it undermines the very foundation of Christianity it self. And surely nothing ought to be admitted to be a part of the *Christian Doctrine* which destroys the reason of our belief of the whole. And that



that this Doctrine does so, will appear evidently, if we consider what was the main argument which the Apostles used to convince the world of the *truth of Christianity*; and that was this, *That our blessed Saviour, the Author of this Doctrine, wrought such and such miracles, and particularly that he rose again from the dead*: And this they proved because they were eye-witnesses of his miracles, and had seen him and conversed with him after he was risen from the dead. But what if their senses did deceive them in this matter? then it cannot be denied but that the main proof of Christianity falls to the ground.

Well! We will now suppose (as the Church of *Rome* does) *Transubstantiation* to have been one principal part of the Christian Doctrine which the Apostles preached. But if this Doctrine be true, then all mens senses are deceived in a plain sensible matter, wherein 'tis as hard for them to be deceived as in any thing in the world: For two things can hardly be imagin'd more different, than a *little bit* of wafer and the *whole body* of a man.

So that the Apostles perswading men to believe this Doctrine perswaded them not to trust their senses, and yet the argument which they used to perswade them to this

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was built upon the direct contrary principle, that *mens senses are to be trusted*. For if they be not, then notwithstanding all the evidence the Apostles offer'd for the resurrection of our Saviour he might not be risen, and so the faith of Christians was vain. So that they represent the Apostles as absurd as is possible, *viz.* going about to perswade men out of their senses by virtue of an argument, the whole strength whereof depends upon the certainty of sense.

And now the matter is brought to a fair issue; If the testimony of *sense* be to be relied upon, then *Transubstantiation* is false; If it be not, then no man is sure that Christianity is true. For the utmost assurance that the Apostles had of the truth of Christianity was the testimony of their own senses concerning our Saviour's miracles, and this testimony every man hath against *Transubstantiation*. From whence it plainly follows, that no man (no not the Apostles themselves) had more reason to believe *Christianity* to be true, than every man hath to believe *Transubstantiation* to be false. And we who did not see our Saviour's Miracles (as the Apostles did) and have onely a credible relation of them, but do see the *Sacrament*, have less evidence of the *truth of Christianity*



nity than of the *falsehood* of *Transubstantiation*.

But cannot God impose upon the senses of men, and represent things to them otherwise than they are? Yes, undoubtedly. And if he hath revealed that he doth this, are we not to believe him? Most certainly. But then we ought to be assured that he hath made such a Revelation; which *Assurance* no man can have, the certainty of sense being taken away.

I shall press the business a little farther. Supposing the *Scripture* to be a *Divine Revelation*, and that these words (*This is my Body*) if they be in Scripture, must necessarily be taken in the strict and literal sense; I ask now, What greater evidence any man has that these words (*This is my Body*) are in the Bible, than every man has that the Bread is not chang'd in the Sacrament? Nay no man has so much; for we have onely the evidence of *one* sense that these words are in the Bible, but that the Bread is not chang'd we have the concurring testimony of *several* of our senses. In a word, if this be once admitted that the *Senses* of all men are deceiv'd in one of the most plain sensible matters that can be, there is no certain means left either to convey or prove a *Divine Revelation* to

men; nor is there any way to confute the grossest impostures in the World: For if the clear evidence of all mens senses be not sufficient for this purpose, let any man, if he can, find a better and more convincing argument.

5. I will instance but in one *Doctrine* more; And that shall be, their *Doctrine* of *deposing Kings* in case of Heresie, and absolving their Subjects from their Allegiance to them. And this is not a meer *speculative Doctrine*, but hath been put in practice many a time by the Bishops of *Rome*, as every one knows that is vers'd in History. For the troubles and confusions which were occasion'd by this very thing make up a good part of the History of several Ages.

I hope no body expects that I should take the pains to shew that this was not the *Doctrine* of our Saviour and his Apostles, nor of the Primitive Christians. The *Papists* are many of them so far from pretending this, that in some times and places, when it is not seasonable and for their purpose, we have much a-do to perswade them that ever it was their *Doctrine*. But if *Transubstantiation* be their *Doctrine*, *this* is; for they came both out of the same Forge, I mean the Council of *Lateran* under



der Pope *Innocent* the Third. And if (as they tell us) *Transubstantiation* was then establish'd, so was *this*. And indeed one would think they were Twins and brought forth at the same time, they are so like one another, both of them so monstrously unreasonable.

II. I come now in the *second* place to consider some *Practices* of the Church of *Rome*, which I am afraid will prove as bad as her *Doctrines*. I shall instance in these five.

I. Their celebrating of their Divine service in an *unknown tongue*. And that not onely contrary to the practice of the Primitive Church, and to the great end and design of Religious Worship, which is the edification of those who are concerned in it, (and it is hard to imagine how men can be edified by what they do not understand) but likewise in direct contradiction to *St. Paul*, who hath no less than a whole Chapter wherein he confutes this practice as fully, and condemns it as plainly as any thing is condemned in the whole Bible. And they that can have the face to maintain that this practice was not condemned by *St. Paul*, or that it was allowed and used in the first Ages of Christianity,

stianity, need not be ashamed to set up for the defence of any paradox in the World.

2. The Communion *in one kind*. And that notwithstanding that even by their own acknowledgment our Saviour instituted it in both kinds, and the primitive Church administred it in both kinds. This I must acknowledge is *no addition* to Christianity, but a *sacrilegious taking away* of an essential part of the Sacrament. For the *Cup* is as essential a part of the institution as the *Bread*; and they might as well, and by the same Authority, take away the one as the other, and both as well as either.

3. Their worshipping of *Images*. Which practice (notwithstanding all their distinctions about it, which are no other but what the *Heathens* used in the same case) is as point-blank against the *second Commandment*, as a *deliberate and malicious killing* of a man is against the *sixth*. But if the case be so plain, a man would think that at least the Teachers and Guides of that Church should be sensible of it. Why, they are so, and afraid the people should be so too, and therefore in their ordinary *Catechisms* and *Manuals* of Devotion they leave out the *second Commandment*, and divide



divide the *tenth* into two to make up the number; lest if the common people should know it their Consciences should start at the doing of a thing so directly contrary to the plain command of God.

4. The worshipping of the *bread* and *wine* in the Eucharist, out of a false and groundless perswasion, *that they are substantially changed into the body and bloud of Christ*. Which if it be not true (and it hath good fortune if it be, for certainly it is one of the most incredible things in the whole World) then by the confession of several of their own learned Writers, they are guilty of *gross idolatry*.

5. The worship and invocation of *Saints* and *Angels*; and particularly of the *Virgin Mary*, which hath now for some Ages been a principal part of their Religion. Now a man may justly wonder that so considerable a part of Religion as they make this to be should have no manner of foundation in the Scripture. Does our Saviour any where speak one word concerning the worshipping of Her? Nay, does he not take all occasions to restrain all extravagant apprehensions and imaginations concerning honour due to Her, as foreseeing the degeneracy of the Church in this thing? When he was told that his

Mother and Brethren were without ; *Who* ( says he ) *are my mother and my brethren : He that doth the will of my Father, the same is my mother, and sister, and brother.* And when the Woman brake forth into that rapture concerning the blessed Mother of our Lord, *Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps that gave thee suck !* Our Saviour diverts to another thing, *Tea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it.* Does either our Saviour or his Apostles in all their particular Precepts and Directions concerning Prayer, and the manner of it, and by whom we are to address our selves to God, give the least intimation of praying to the Virgin *Mary*, or making use of her Mediation ? And can any man believe, that if this had been the *practice* of the Church from the beginning, our *Saviour* and his Apostles would have been so silent about so considerable a part of Religion ; Infomuch that in all the Epistles of the Apostles I do not remember that her Name is so much as once mentioned ? And yet the worship of her is at this day in the Church of *Rome*, and hath been so for several Ages, a main part of their publick worship, yea and of their private devotions too ; in which it is usual with them to say *ten Ave Marias* for one *Pater*



*Pater Noster*; that is, for one Prayer they make to Almighty God they make ten addresses to the blessed Virgin; for that is the proportion observed in their *Rosaries*. He that considers *this*, and had never seen the *Bible*, would have been apt to think that there had been more said concerning *Her* in Scripture, than either concerning *God*, or our blessed *Saviour*; and that the New Testament were full from one end to the other of precepts and exhortations to the worshipping of *Her*; and yet when all is done, I challenge any man to shew me so much as one sentence in the whole Bible that sounds that way. And there is as little in the Christian Writers of the first three hundred years. The truth is, *this practice* began to creep in among some superstitious people about the middle of the *fourth Century*: And I remember particularly, that *Epiphanius* who lived about that time calls it the *Hereſie of the Women*.

And thus I have given you some Instances of several *Doctrines* and *Practices* which the Church of *Rome* have built upon the Foundation of *Christianity*. Much more might have been said of them, but from what hath been said any man may easily discern how dangerous they are to the salvation of men.

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I proceed now in the second place,

II. To consider, whether our granting a *possibility of salvation*, though with great hazard, to those in the Communion of the *Roman Church*, and their denying it to us, be a sufficient argument and encouragement to any man to quit our Church and go to theirs. And there is the more need to consider this, because this is the great *popular argument* wherewith the *emissaries* and *agents* of that Church are wont to assault our people. *Your Church* (say they) *grants that a Papist may be saved; Ours denies that a Protestant can be saved: therefore it is safest to be of our Church, in which salvation by the acknowledgment of both sides is possible.*

For answer to this I shall endeavour to shew, that this is so far from being a *good argument* that it is so intolerably *weak* and *sophistical* that any considerate man ought to be asham'd to be catch'd by it. For either it is good of it self and sufficient to perswade a man to relinquish our Church, and to pass over to theirs, without entring into the merits of the cause on either side, and without comparing the Doctrines and Practices of both the Churches together, or it is not. If it be not sufficient *of it self* to perswade a man to leave our Church, without



without comparing the Doctrines on both sides, then it is to no purpose, and there is nothing got by it. For if upon examination and comparing of Doctrines the one appear to be *true* and the other *false*, this alone is a sufficient inducement to any man to cleave to that Church where the true Doctrine is found; and then there is no need of this argument.

If it be said, that this argument is good in it self without the examination of the Doctrines of both Churches; this seems a very strange thing for any man to affirm, *That it is reason enough to a man to be of any Church, whatever her Doctrines and Practices be, if she do but damn those that differ from her, and if the Church that differs from her do but allow a possibility of salvation in her Communion.*

But they who use this argument, pretend that it is sufficient of it self; and therefore I shall apply my self to shew, as briefly and plainly as I can, the miserable *weakness* and *insufficiency* of it to satisfy any mans conscience or prudence to change his Religion. And to this end I shall,

1. Shew the weakness of the *principle* upon which this argument relies.

2. Give

2. Give some *parallel instances* by which it will clearly appear that it concludes false.

3. I shall take notice of some *gross absurdities* that follow from it.

4. Shew how unfit it is to work upon those to whom it is propounded. And

5. How improper it is to be urged by those that make use of it.

I. I shall shew the *weakness* of the *principle* upon which this *argument* relies ; And that is this, *That whatever different parties in Religion agree in, is safest to be chosen.* The true consequence of which *principle* if it be driven to the head, is to persuade men to forsake Christianity, and to make them take up in the principles of *natural Religion*, for in these all Religions do agree. For if this *principle* be true, and signifie any thing, it is dangerous to embrace any thing wherein the several parties in Religion differ ; because that onely is safe and prudent to be chosen wherein all agree. So that this *argument*, if the foundation of it be good, will persuade further than those who make use of it desire it should do ; for it will not onely make men forsake the *Protestant Religion*, but *Popery* too ; and which is much more considerable, *Christianity* it self.

II. I will



II. I will give some *parallel instances* by which it will clearly be seen that this *argument* concludes false. The *Donatists* denied the Baptism of the *Catholicks* to be good, but the *Catholicks* acknowledged the Baptism of the *Donatists* to be valid. So that both sides were agreed that the Baptism of the *Donatists* was good, therefore the safest way for St. *Austin* and other *Catholicks* (according to this *argument*) was to be Baptized again by the *Donatists*, because by the acknowledgment of both sides Baptism among them was valid.

But to come nearer to the Church of Rome. Several in that Church hold the *personal Infallibility of the Pope and the lawfulness of deposing and killing Kings for Heresie* to be *de fide*, that is, necessary Articles of Faith, and consequently, that whoever does not believe them cannot be saved. But a great many *Papists*, though they believe these things to be no matters of Faith, yet they think those that hold them may be saved, and they are generally very favourable towards them. But now, according to this *argument*, they ought all to be of their opinion in these points, because both sides are agreed that *they that hold them may be saved*; but one side positively says that *men cannot be saved if they do not hold them*. But

But my Text furnisheth me with as good an instance to this purpose as can be desired. *St. Paul* here in the Text acknowledgeth the *possibility* of the *salvation* of those *who built hay and stubble upon the foundation of Christianity*; that they might be saved, though with great difficulty, and as it were *out of the fire*. But now among those builders with hay and stubble there were those who denied the possibility of *St. Paul's* salvation and of those who were of his mind. We are told of some who built the *Jewish Ceremonies* and observances upon the foundation of Christianity, and said that unless men were Circumcised and kept the Law of *Moses* they could not be saved. So that by this argument *St. Paul* and his followers ought to have gone over to those *Judaizing Christians*, because it was acknowledged on both sides that they might be saved. But these *Judaizing Christians* were as uncharitable to *St. Paul* and other Christians as the Church of *Rome* is now to us, for they said positively *that they could not be saved*. But can any man think that *St. Paul* would have been moved by this argument, to leave a safe and certain way of salvation for that which was onely possible, and that with great difficulty and hazard? The  
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argument you see is the very same, and yet it concludes the wrong way; which plainly shews that it is a *contingent argument*, and concludes uncertainly and by chance, and therefore no man ought to be moved by it.

III. I shall take notice of some *gross absurdities* that follow from it. I shall mention but these two.

I. According to this *principle* it is always safest to be on the *uncharitable side*. And yet uncharitableness is as bad an evidence, either of a true Christian, or a true Church, as a man would wish. *Charity* is one of the most essential marks of Christianity, and what the Apostle saith of particular Christians is as true of whole Churches, that *though they have all Faith, yet if they have not Charity they are nothing*.

I grant that no Charity teacheth men to see others damned, and not to tell them the danger of their condition. But it is to be consider'd that the damning of men is a very hard thing, and therefore whenever we do it the case must be wonderfully plain. And is it so in this matter? They of the Church of *Rome* cannot deny but that we embrace all the Doctrines of our Saviour, contain'd in the Apostles Creed

Creed and determined by the four first General Councils: And yet they will not allow this and a good life to put us within a possibility of salvation, because we will not submit to all the innovations they would impose upon us. And yet I think there is scarce any *Doctrine* or *Practice* in difference between them and us, which some or other of their most learned Writers have not acknowledged either not to be sufficiently contained in Scripture, or not to have been held and practised by the primitive Church; so that nothing can excuse their uncharitableness towards us. And they pay dear for the little advantage they get by this *argument*, for they do what in them lies to make themselves no Christians that they may prove themselves the truer and more Christian Church; A *medium* which we do not desire to make use of.

2. If this *argument* were good, then by this trick a man may bring over all the world to agree with him in an error which another does not account damnable, whatever it be, provided he do but damn all those that do not hold it; and there wants nothing but *confidence* and *uncharitableness* to do this. But is there any sence, that another mans boldness and want of charity should



should be an argument to move me to be of his opinion? I cannot illustrate this better, than by the difference between a skilfull Physician and a Mountebank. A *learned* and *skilfull Physician* is modest, and speaks *justly* of things: He says, that such a method of cure which he hath directed is safe, and withall, that that which the *Mountebank* prescribes may possibly do the work, but there is great hazard and danger in it: But the *Mountebank*, who never talks of any thing less than *infallible cures*, ( and always the more *Mountebank* the stronger pretence to *infallibility* ) he is *positive* that that method which the *Physician* prescribes will destroy the patient, but his receipt is infallible and never fails. Is there any reason in this case, that this man should carry it meerly by his *confidence*? And yet if this *argument* be good, the safest way is to reject the *Physicians* advice and to stick to the *Mountebanks*. For both sides are agreed, that there is a possibility of cure in the *Mountebank's* method, but not in the *Physicians*; and so the whole force of the argument lies in the *confidence* of an *ignorant man*.

IV. This *argument* is very unfit to work upon *those* to whom it is propounded: For either they believe we say true in this,

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or not. If they think we do not, they have no reason to be moved by what we say. If they think we do, why do they not take in all that we say in this matter? Namely, that though it be possible for some in the communion of the *Roman Church* to be saved, yet it is very hazardous; and that they are in a safe condition already in our Church. And why then should a *bare possibility*, accompany'd with infinite and apparent hazard, be an argument to any man to run into that danger?

Lastly, This *argument* is very improper to be urged by those who make use of it. Half of the strength of it lies in this, that we *Protestants* acknowledge that *it is possible a Papist may be saved*. But why should they lay any stress upon this? What matter is it what we Hereticks say, who are so damnably mistaken in all other things? Methinks, if there were no other reason, yet because we say it, it should seem to them to be unlikely to be true. But I perceive when it serves for their purpose we have some little credit and authority among them.

By this time I hope every one is in some measure satisfied of the *weakness of this argument*, which is so transparent that no wise man can honestly use it, and he must have



have a very odd understanding that can be cheated by it. The truth is, it is a *casual and contingent argument*, and sometimes it concludes right, and oftner wrong; and therefore no prudent man can be moved by it, except onely in one case, when all things are so equal on both sides that there is nothing else in the whole world to determine him; which surely can never happen in matters of Religion necessary to be believed. No man is so weak, as not to consider in the change of his Religion the *merits* of the *cause it self*; as not to examine the *Doctrines* and *Practices* of the Churches on both sides; as not to take notice of the *confidence* and *Charity* of both Parties, together with all other things which ought to move a conscientious and a prudent man: And if upon enquiry there appear to be a clear advantage on either side, then this *argument* is needless and comes too late, because the work is already done without it.

Besides, that the great hazard of salvation in the *Roman Church* ( which we declare upon account of the *Doctrines* and *Practices* which I have mentioned ) ought to deter any man much more from that Religion, than the acknowledged possibility of salvation in it ought to encourage

any man to the embracing of it: Never did any Christian Church build so much *hay* and *stubble* upon the *foundation* of Christianity, and therefore *those that are saved in it must be saved*, as it were, *out of the fire*. And though *Purgatory* be not meant in the Text, yet it is a Doctrine very well suited to their manner of building; for there is need of an *ignis purgatorius*, of a *fire* to try their work what it is, and to *burn* up their *hay* and *stubble*. And I have so much Charity ( and I desire always to have it ) as to hope, that a great many among them who live piously, and have been almost inevitably detain'd in that Church by the prejudice of education and an invincible ignorance, will upon a *general repentance* find mercy with God; and *though their work suffer loss and be burnt*, yet *they themselves may escape, as out of the fire*. But as for those who had the opportunities of coming to the knowledge of the truth, if they continue in the errors of that Church, or apostatize from the truth, I think their condition so far from being safe that there must be extraordinary favourable circumstances in their case to give a man hopes of their salvation.

I have now done with the *two* things I propounded to speak to. And I am sorry that  
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the *necessary* defence of our Religion, against the *restless importunities* and *attempts* of our adversaries upon all sorts of persons, hath engaged me to spend so much time in matters of dispute, which I had much rather have employed in another way. Many of you can be my witnesses that I have constantly made it my business, in this great Presence and Assembly to plead against the *impieties* and *wickedness* of men, and have endeavoured by the best arguments I could think of to gain men over to a *firm belief* and serious *practice* of the main things of Religion. And, I do assure you, I had much rather persuade any one to be a good man, than to be of any party or denomination of Christians whatsoever. For I doubt not but *the belief of the ancient Creed*, provided we entertain nothing that is destructive of it, *together with a good life*, will *certainly save a man*; and without this no man can have reasonable hopes of salvation, no not an infallible Church, if there were any such to be found in the world.

I have been, according to my opportunities, not a negligent observer of the *genius* and humour of the several Sects and Professions in Religion. And upon the whole matter, I do in my conscience be-

lieve the Church of *England* to be the best constituted Church this day in the world; and that, as to the main, the *Doctrine*, and *Government*, and *Worship* of it, are excellently framed to make men *soberly Religious*: Securing men on the one hand, from the wild freaks of *Enthusiasm*; and on the other, from the gross follies of *Superstition*. And our Church hath this peculiar advantage above several Professions that we know in the world, that it acknowledgeth a due and just subordination to the *civil Authority*, and hath always been untainted in its *loyalty*.

And now shall every trifling consideration be sufficient to move a man to relinquish such a Church? There is no greater disparagement to a mans understanding, no greater argument of a light and ungenerous mind, than rashly to change ones Religion. Religion is our greatest concernment of all other, and it is not every *little argument*, no nor a great noise about *infallibility*, nothing but very *plain* and *convincing evidence*, that should sway a man in this case. But they are utterly inexcusable who make a change of such concernment upon the insinuations of one side onely, without ever hearing what can be said for the Church they were baptized



tized and brought up in before they leave it. They that can yield thus easily to the impressions of every one that hath a design and interest to make *Profelytes* may at this rate of discretion change their *Religion* twice a day, and instead of morning and evening Prayer they may have a morning and evening *Religion*.

Therefore for God's sake, and for our own Souls sake, and for the sake of our Reputation, let us consider and *shew our selves men*; Let us not suffer our selves to be shaken and carried away with every wind. Let us not run our selves into danger when we may be safe. Let us stick to the *foundation of Religion*, the *Articles* of our *common belief*, and build upon them gold, and silver, and precious stones, I mean, the *vertues and actions of a good life*; and if we would do this, we should not be apt to set such a value upon *hay and stubble*. If we would sincerely endeavour to live *holy and vertuous lives*, we should not need to cast about for a *Religion* which may furnish us with easie and indirect ways to get to Heaven.

I will conclude all with the Apostles Exhortation, *Wherefore my beloved brethren be ye stedfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.*

*Sermon Third.*

*Now the God of peace which brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, the great Shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the everlasting Covenant, make you perfect in every good work, to do his will; working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be. Glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

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*Pfal.*

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Pfal. CXIX. 156.

*Great peace have they that love thy Law, and nothing shall offend them.*

**I**N these words there are two things contained, the Description of a good man, and the Reward of his goodness.

1. The Description of a good man, He is said to be one that *loves the Law* of God, that is, that loves to meditate upon it, and to practice it.

2. The Reward of his goodness; *Great peace have they that love thy Law.* The word *Peace* is many times used in Scripture in a very large sense, so as to comprehend all kind of happiness: sometimes it signifies outward peace and quiet, in opposition to war and contention; and sometimes inward peace and contentment in opposition to inward trouble and anguish. I understand the *Text* chiefly in this last sense,  
not

not wholly excluding either of the other.

My design at present from these words is, to recommend Religion to men from the consideration of that inward peace and pleasure which attends it. And surely nothing can be said more to the advantage of Religion in the opinion of considerate men than this. For the aim of all Philosophy, and the great search of wise men, hath been how to attain peace and tranquillity of mind. And if Religion be able to give this, a greater commendation need not be given to Religion.

But before I enter upon this argument, I shall premise *two* things by way of Caution :

*First*, That these kind of Observations are not to be taken too strictly and rigorously, as if they never failed in any one instance. *Aristotle* observed long since, that moral and proverbial sayings are understood to be true generally and for the most part ; and that is all the truth that is to be expected in them : As, when *Solomon* says, *Train up a child in the way wherein he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it* : This is not to be so taken as if no child that is piously educated did ever miscarry afterwards, but that



that the good education of children is the best way to make good men, and commonly approved to be so by experience. So here, when it is said that *great peace have they that love God's Law*; the meaning is, that Religion hath generally this effect, though in some cases, and as to some persons, it may be accidentally hindered.

*Secondly*, When I say that Religion gives peace and tranquillity to our minds, this is chiefly to be understood of a Religious state in which a man is well settled and confirmed, and not of our first entrance into it, for that is more or less troublesome according as we make it. If we begin a religious course betimes, before we have contracted any great guilt, and before the habits of sin be grown strong in us, the work goes on easily without any great conflict or resistance. But the case is otherwise when a man breaks off from a wicked life, and becomes religious from the direct contrary course, in which he hath been long and deeply engaged. In this case no man is so unreasonable as to deny, that there is a great deal of sensible trouble and difficulty in the making of this change; but when it is once made, peace and comfort will spring up by degrees, and daily encrease as we grow more con-

confirmed and established in a good course.

These *two* things being premised, I shall now endeavour to shew that Religion gives a man the greatest pleasure and satisfaction of mind, and that there is no true peace, nor any comparable pleasure to be had in a contrary course. And that from these two heads. From *Testimony of Scripture*; and from the *Nature of Religion* which is apt to produce peace and tranquillity of mind.

I. *First*, From *Testimony of Scripture*. I shall select some of those *Texts* which are more full and express to this purpose, *Job* 22. 21. speaking of God, *Acquaint thyself now with him and be at peace.* To acquaint our selves with God is a phrase of the same importance with *coming to God*, and *seeking of him*, and many other like expressions in Scripture which signifie nothing else but to become religious, *Psal.* 37. 38. *Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace:* Or, as these words are rendred according to the LXX. in our old Translation, *Keep innocency, take heed to the thing that is right, for that shall bring thee peace at the last.* *Prov.* 3. 17. Where *Solomon* speaking of *Wisdom*, which with him is but another name



name for Religion, says, *Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.* Isa. 32. 17. *The work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.* Matt. 11. 28, 29. *Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.* Now to come to Christ is to become his Disciples, to believe and practise his Doctrine; for so our Saviour explains himself in the next words, *Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, and ye shall find rest for your souls.* Rom. 2. 10. *Glory, and honour, and peace to every man that worketh good.*

And on the contrary, the Scripture represents the condition of a sinner to be full of trouble and disquiet. David though he was a very good man yet when he had grievously offended God the anguish of his mind was such, as even to disorder and distemper his body, *Psal. 38. 2, 3, 4. Thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore; there is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger, neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin; for mine iniquities are gone over mine head, and as an heavy burthen they are too heavy for me.* Isa. 57. 20, 21. *The wicked are like the troubled Sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt; there*

*is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked. And Isa. 59. 7, 8. Misery and destruction are in their paths, and the way of peace they know not; they have made themselves crooked paths, whosoever goeth therein shall not know peace, Rom. 2. 9. Tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doth evil.*

You see how full and expresse the *Scripture* is in this matter. I come now in the

II. *Second* place, To give you a more particular account of this from the *Nature of Religion*, which is apt to produce peace and tranquillity of mind. And that I shall do in these three particulars.

1. Religion is apt to remove the chief causes of inward trouble and disquiet.

2. It furnisheth us with all the true causes of peace and tranquillity of mind.

3. The reflection upon a religious course of life and all the actions of it, doth afterwards yield great pleasure and satisfaction.

*First, Religion is apt to remove the chief causes of inward trouble and disquiet.* The chief causes of inward trouble and discontent are these two, *Doubting* and anxiety of mind, and *Guilt* of Conscience. Now Religion is apt to free us from both these.

I. From



1. From *Doubting* and anxiety of mind. Irreligion and Atheism makes a man full of doubts and jealousies whether he be in the right, and whether at last things will not prove quite otherwise than he hath rashly determined. For though a man endeavour never so much to settle himself in the principles of Infidelity, and to persuade his mind that there is no God, and consequently that there are no rewards to be hoped for, nor punishments to be feared in another life; yet he can never attain to a steady and unshaken persuasion of these things: and however he may please himself with witty reasons against the common belief of mankind, and smart reparties to their arguments, and bold and pleasant raillery about these matters; yet I dare say; no man ever sat down in a clear and full satisfaction concerning them. For when he hath done all that he can to reason himself out of Religion, his conscience ever and anon recoyls upon him, and his natural thoughts and apprehensions rise up against his reasonings, and all his wit and subtilty is confuted and born down by a secret and strong suspicion, which he can by no means get out of his mind, that things may be otherwise.

And

And the reason hereof is plain, because all this is an endeavour against nature and those vigorous instincts which God hath planted in the minds of men to the contrary. For whenever our minds are free and not violently hurried away by passion, nor blinded by prejudice, they do of themselves return to their first and most natural apprehensions of things. And this is the reason why when the Atheist falls into any great calamity, and is awakened to an impartial consideration of things by the apprehension of Death and Judgment, and despairs of enjoying any longer those pleasures for the sake of which he hath all this while rebelled against Religion, his courage presently sinks, and all his arguments fail him, and his case is now too serious to admit of jesting, and at the bottom of his soul he doubts of all that which he asserted with so much confidence and set so good a face upon before, and can find no ease to his mind but in retreating from his former principles, nor no hopes of consolation for himself but in acknowledging that God whom he hath denied and imploring his mercy whom he hath affronted.

This



This is always the case of these persons when they come to extremity, not to mention the infinite checks and rebukes which their own minds give them upon other occasions; so that 'tis very seldom that these men have any tolerable enjoyment of themselves, but are forced to run away from themselves into company, and to stupify themselves by intemperance, that they may not feel the fearfull twitches and gripings of their own minds.

Whereas he who entertains the principles of Religion, and therein follows his own natural apprehensions and the general voice of mankind, and is not conscious to himself that he knowingly and wilfully lives contrary to these principles, hath no anxiety in his mind about these things; being verily perswaded they are true, and that he hath all the reason in the world to think so; and if they should prove otherwise (which he hath no other cause to suspect) yet he hath this satisfaction, that he hath taken the wisest course, and hath consulted his own present peace and future security infinitely better than the Atheist hath done, in case he should prove to be mistaken. For it is a fatal mistake to think there is no God, if there be one; but a mistake on the other hand

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hath no future bad consequences depending upon it, nor indeed any great present inconvenience, Religion onely restraining a man from doing some things from most of which it is good he should be restrained however; so that at the worst the religious man is onely mistaken, but the Atheist is miserable if he be mistaken; *miserable* beyond all imagination, and past all remedy.

2. Another, and indeed a principal cause of trouble and discontent to the minds of men is *Guilt*. Now Guilt is a consciousness to our selves that we have done amiss, and the very thought that we have done amiss is apt to lie very cross in our minds and to cause great anguish and confusion. Besides that Guilt is always attended with Fear, which naturally springs up in the mind of man from a secret apprehension of the mischief and inconvenience that his sin will bring upon him, and of the vengeance that hangs over him from God, and will overtake him either in this world, or in the other.

And though the sinner, while he is in full health and prosperity, may make a shift to divert and shake off these Fears; yet they frequently return upon him, and upon every little noise of danger, upon the  
appre-



apprehension of any calamity that comes near him, his guilty mind is presently jealous that it is making towards him and is particularly levelled against him. For he is sensible that there is a just power above him to whose indignation he is continually liable, and therefore he is always in fear of him, and how long soever he may have scaped punishment in this world he cannot but dread the vengeance of the other; And these thoughts are a continual disturbance to his mind and *in the midst of laughter make his heart heavy*, and the longer he continues in a wicked course the more he multiplies the grounds and causes of his fears.

But now Religion frees a man from all this torment, either by preventing the cause of it, or directing to the cure; either by preserving us from guilt, or clearing us of it in case we have contracted it. It preserves us from guilt by keeping us innocent; and in case we have offended, it clears us of it by leading us to repentance and the amendment of our lives; which is the onely way to recover the favour of God and the peace of our own consciences, and to secure us against all apprehension of danger from the divine Justice; though not absolutely from all fear of

punishment in this world, yet from that which is the great danger of all, the condemnation and torment of the world to come. And by this means a mans mind is settled in perfect peace, Religion freeing him from those tormenting fears of the Divine displeasure, which he can upon no other terms rid himself of; whereas the sinner is always sowing the seeds of trouble in his own mind, and laying a foundation of continual discontent to himself.

*Secondly,* As Religion removes the chief grounds of trouble and disquiet, so it *ministers to us all the true causes of peace and tranquillity of mind.* Whoever lives according to the Rules of Religion lays these three great foundations of peace and comfort to himself.

1. He is satisfied that in being religious he doth that which is most reasonable.

2. That he secures himself against the greatest mischiefs and dangers by making God his Friend.

3. That upon the whole matter he does in all respects most effectually consult and promote his own interest and happiness.

1. He is satisfied that he does that which is most reasonable. And it is no small pleasure to be justified to our selves, to be satisfied that we are what we ought to be,  
and



and do what in reason we ought to do; that which best becomes us, and which according to the primitive intention of our Being is most natural, for whatever is natural is pleasant. Now the practice of piety towards God, and of every other grace and vertue which Religion teacheth us, are things reasonable in themselves, and what God when he made us intended we should do. And a man is then pleased with himself and his own actions, when he doth what he is convinced he ought to do; and is then offended with himself, when he goes against the light of his own mind by neglecting his duty or doing contrary to it; for then his conscience checks him, and there is something within him that is uneasie and puts him into disorder. As when a man eats or drinks any thing that is unwholsom it offends his stomach, and puts his body into an unnatural and a restless state.

For every thing is then at rest and peace when it is in that state in which Nature intended it to be, and being violently forced out of it, it is never quiet till it recover again. Now Religion and the practice of its vertues is the natural state of the soul, the condition to which God designed it. As God made man a Reasonable Crea-

ture, so all the acts of Religion are reasonable and suitable to our nature: And our souls are then in health when we are what the Laws of Religion require us to be, and do what they command us to do. And as we find an unexpressible ease and pleasure when our body is in its perfect state of health, and on the contrary every distemper causeth pain and uneasiness; so is it with the soul. When Religion governs all our inclinations and actions, and the temper of our minds and the course of our lives is conformable to the precepts of it, all is at peace. But when we are otherwise, and live in any vicious practice, how can there be peace; so long as we act unreasonably, and do those things whereby we necessarily create trouble and disturbance to our selves? How can we hope to be at ease so long as we are in a sick and diseased condition? Till the corruption that is in us be wrought out, our spirits will be in a perpetual tumult and fermentation; and it is as impossible for us to enjoy the peace and serenity of our minds as it is for a sick man to be at ease: The man may use what arts of diversion he will, and change from one place and posture to another: but still he is restless, because there is that within him gives him  
pain



pain and disturbance, *There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.* Such men may dissemble their condition, and put on the face and appearance of pleasantness and contentment; but God, who sees all the secrets of mens hearts, knows it is far otherwise with them, *There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.*

2. Another ground of peace which the Religious man hath is, That he hath made God his Friend. Now Friendship is peace and pleasure both; It is mutual love, and that is a double pleasure; And it is hard to say which is the greatest, the pleasure of loving God, or of knowing that he loves us. Now whoever sincerely endeavours to please God may rest perfectly assured that God hath no displeasure against him; for *the righteous Lord loveth righteousness, and his countenance shall behold the upright;* that is, he will be favourable to such persons. As *he hates the workers of iniquity, so he takes pleasure in them that fear him, in such as keep his covenant and remember his commandments to do them.*

And being assured of his favour, we are secured against the greatest dangers and the greatest fears; and may say with David, *Return then unto thy rest, O my soul,*

*for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee: The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?* What can reasonably trouble or discontent that man who hath made his peace with God and is restored to his favour, who is the best and most powerfull friend, and can be the worst and most dangerous enemy in the whole World?

3. By being religious we do most effectually consult our own interest and happiness. A great part of Religion consists in moderating our appetites and passions, and this naturally tends to the composure of our minds. He that lives piously and vertuously acts according to Reason, and in so doing maintains the present peace of his own mind; and not onely so, but he lays the foundation of his future happiness to all Eternity. For Religion gives a man the hopes of eternal life: And all pleasure does not consist in present enjoyment; there is a mighty pleasure also, in the firm belief and expectation of a future good; and if it be a great and lasting good, it will support a man under a great many present evils. If Religion be certainly the way to avoid the greatest evils, and to bring us to happiness at last, we may contentedly



tentedly bear a great many afflictions for its sake. For though all suffering be grievous, yet it is pleasant to escape great dangers, and to come to the possession of a mighty good, though it be with great difficulty and inconvenience to our selves. And when we come to heaven ( if ever we be so happy as to get thither ) it will be a new and a greater pleasure to us to remember the pains and troubles whereby we were saved and made happy.

So that all these put together are a firm foundation of peace and comfort to a good man. There is a great satisfaction in the very doing of our duty and acting reasonably, though there may happen to be some present trouble and inconvenience in it. But when we do not onely satisfy our selves in so doing, but likewise please him whose favour is better than life, and whose frowns are more terrible than death; when in doing our duty we directly promote our own happiness, and in serving God do most effectually serve our own interest, what can be imagined to minister more peace and pleasure to the mind of man?

This is the *second thing*. Religion furnisheth us with all the true causes of peace and tranquillity of mind.

*Thirdly,*

*Thirdly, The Reflection upon a religious and vertuous course of life doth afterwards yield a mighty pleasure and satisfaction. And what can commend Religion more to us, than that the remembrance of any pious and vertuous action gives us so much contentment and delight? So that whatever difficulty and reluctancy we may find in the doing of it, to be sure there is peace and satisfaction in the looking back upon it. No man ever reflected upon himself with regret for having done his duty to God or Man; for having lived soberly, or righteously, or godly in this present world. Nay, on the contrary, the conscience of any duty faithfully discharged, the memory of any good we have done, does refresh the soul with a strange kind of pleasure and joy. Our rejoicing is this (saith St. Paul) the testimony of our consciences, that in all simplicity and godly sincerity we have had our conversation in the world.*

But on the other side, the course of a vicious life, all acts of impiety to God, of malice and injustice to men, of intemperance and excess in reference to our selves, do certainly leave a sting behind them. And whatever pleasure there may be in the present act of them, the memory of  
them



them is so tormenting that men are glad to use all the arts of diversion to fence off the thoughts of them. One of the greatest troubles in the world to a bad man is to look into himself, and to remember how he hath lived. I appeal to the consciences of men whether this be not true.

And is not here now a mighty difference between these two courses of life; that when we do any thing that is good, if there be any trouble in it it is soon over, but the pleasure of it is perpetual: when we do a wicked action the pleasure of it is short and transient, but the trouble and sting of it remains for ever? The reflection upon the good we have done gives a lasting satisfaction to our minds, but the remembrance of any evil committed by us leaves a perpetual discontent.

And, which is yet more considerable, a religious and vertuous course of life does then yield most peace and comfort when we most stand in need of it; in times of affliction, and at the hour of death. When a man falls into any great calamity there is no comfort in the world like to that of a good conscience: This makes all calm and serene within when there is nothing but clouds and darkness about him. So *David* observes of the good man, *Psal.* 112. 4.

*Unto*

*Unto the upright there ariseth light in darkness.* All the pious and vertuous actions that we do are so many seeds of peace and comfort, sown in our consciences, which will spring up and flourish most in times of outward trouble and distress, *Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.* And at the hour of death; *The righteous hath hopes in his death,* saith Solomon. And what a seasonable refreshment is it to the mind of man when the pangs of death are ready to take hold of him, and he is just stepping into the other world, to be able to look back with satisfaction upon a religious and well-spent life? Then, if ever, the comforts of a good man do overflow, and a kind of heaven springs up in his mind, and he rejoiceth in the hopes of the glory of God. And that is a true and solid comfort indeed, which will stand by us in the day of adversity, and stick close to us when we have most need of it.

*But with the ungodly it is not so:* His guilt lies in wait for him, especially against such times; and is never more fierce and raging than in the day of distress; so that according as his troubles without are multiplied, so are his stings within. And surely affliction is then grievous indeed when  
it



it falls upon a galled and uneasy mind. Were it not for this, outward afflictions might be tolerable; the *spirit of a man might bear his infirmities, but a wounded spirit who can bear?* But especially at the hour of death. How does the guilt of his wicked life then stare him in the face? What storms and tempests are raised in his soul? which make it like the troubled sea when it cannot rest. When Eternity, that fearfull and amazing sight presents it self to his mind, and he feels himself sinking into the regions of darkness, and is every moment in a fearfull expectation of meeting with the just reward of his deeds; with what regret does he then remember the sins of his life? and how full of rage and indignation is he against himself for having neglected to know, when he had so many opportunities of knowing them, the things that belonged to his peace; and which, because he hath neglected them, are now and likely to be for ever hid from his eyes?

And if this be the true case of the righteous and wicked man I need not multiply words, but may leave it to any mans thoughts in which of these conditions he would be. And surely the difference between them is so very plain that there can be no difficulty in the choice. But

But now though this discourse be very true, yet for the full clearing of this matter it will be but fair to consider what may be said on the other side; And the rather because there are several objections which seem to be countenanced from experience, which is enough to overthrow the most plausible speculation. As,

1. That wicked men seem to have a great deal of pleasure and contentment in their vices.

2. That Religion imposeth many harsh and grievous things, which seem to be inconsistent with that pleasure and satisfaction I have spoken of.

3. That those who are religious are many times very disconsolate and full of trouble.

To the *first*, I deny not that wicked men have some pleasure in their vices; but when all things are rightly computed, and just abatements made, it will amount to very little. For it is the lowest and meanest kind of pleasure, it is chiefly the pleasure of our bodies and our senses, of our worst part; the pleasure of the beast, and not of the man; that which least becomes us, and which we were least of all made for. Those sensual pleasures which are lawfull are much inferiour to  
the



the least satisfaction of the mind, and when they are unlawfull they are always inconsistent with it. And *what is a man profited*, if to gain a little sensual pleasure he lose the peace of his soul? Can we find in our hearts to call that pleasure which robs us of a far greater and higher satisfaction than it brings? The delights of sense are so far from being the chief pleasure which God designed us, that on the contrary he intended we should take our chief pleasure in the restraining and moderating of our sensual appetites and desires, and in keeping them within the bounds of Reason and Religion.

And then, It is not a lasting pleasure. Those fits of mirth which wicked men have, how soon are they over? Like a sudden blaze which after a little flash and noise is presently gone. It is the comparison of a very great and experienced man in these matters; *Like the crackling of thorns under a pot* (saith Solomon) *so is the laughter of the fool*, that is, the mirth of the wicked man; it may be loud, but it lasts not.

But, which is most considerable of all, the pleasures of sin bear no proportion to that long and black train of miseries and inconveniences which they draw after them.

them. Many times poverty and reproach, pains and diseases upon our bodies, *indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doth evil.* So that if these pleasures were greater than they are, a man had better be without them than purchase them at such dear rates.

To the *second.* That Religion imposeth many harsh and grievous things, which seem to be inconsistent with that pleasure and satisfaction I have spoken of: As, the bearing of persecution, repentance and mortification, fasting and abstinence, and many other rigours and severities. As to persecution; This Discourse doth not pretend that Religion exempts men from outward troubles, but that, when they happen, it supports men under them better than any thing else. As for Repentance and mortification; this chiefly concerns our first entrance into Religion after a wicked life, which I acknowledged in the beginning of this discourse to be very grievous: But this doth not hinder but that though Religion may be troublesome at first to some persons whose former sins and crimes have made it so, it may be pleasant afterwards when we are accustomed to it. And whatever the trouble of  
repent-



repentance be, it is unavoidable, unless we resolve to be miserable; for *except we repent we must perish*. Now there is always a rational satisfaction in submitting to a less inconvenience to remedy and prevent a greater. As for Fasting and Abstinence, which is many times very helpfull and subservient to the ends of Religion, there is no such extraordinary trouble in it if it be discreetly managed as is worth the speaking of. And as for other rigours and severities which some pretend Religion does impose, I have onely this to say, that if men will play the fool, and make Religion more troublesome than God hath made it, I cannot help that: And, that this is a false representation of Religion which some in the world have made, as if it did chiefly consist not in pleasing God, but in displeasing and tormenting our selves. This is not to paint Religion like her self, but rather like one of the *Furies*, with nothing but whips and snakes about her.

To the *third*. That those who are religious are many times very disconsolate and full of trouble. This, I confess, is a great Objection indeed if Religion were the cause of this trouble; but there are other plain causes of it, to which Religion rightly understood is not necessary. As,

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false

false and mistaken principles in Religion; the imperfection of our Religion and Obedience to God; and a melancholy temper and disposition. *False and mistaken principles in Religion.* As this for one; That God does not sincerely desire the salvation of men, but hath from all eternity effectually barr'd the greatest part of mankind from all possibility of attaining that happiness which he offers to them; and every one hath cause to fear that he may be in that number. This were a melancholy consideration indeed, if it were true; but there is no ground either from Reason or Scripture to entertain any such thought of God. Our *destruction is of our selves*; and no man shall be ruin'd by any decree of God who does not ruine himself by his own fault.

Or else, *the imperfection of our Religion and Obedience to God.* Some perhaps are very devout in serving God, but not so kind and charitable, so just and honest in their dealings with men. No wonder if such persons be disquieted; the natural consciences of men being not more apt to disquiet them for any thing, than for the neglect of those moral duties, which natural light teacheth them. Peace of conscience is the effect of an impartial and universal



versal obedience to the laws of God; and I hope no man will blame Religion for that which plainly proceeds from the want of Religion.

Or lastly, *A melancholy temper and disposition*; which is not from Religion, but from our nature and constitution; and therefore Religion ought not to be charged with it.

And thus I have endeavoured, as briefly and plainly as I could, to represent to you what peace and pleasure, what comfort and satisfaction, Religion rightly understood and sincerely practised is apt to bring to the minds of men. And I do not know by what sort of Argument Religion can be more effectually recommended to wise and considerate men. For in persuading men to be religious I do not go about to rob them of any true pleasure and contentment, but to direct them to the very best, nay indeed the onely way of attaining and securing it.

I speak this in great pity and compassion to those who make it their great design to please themselves, but do grievously mistake the way to it. The direct way is that which I have set before you, a holy and vertuous life, *to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly and*

*righteously and godly in this present world. A good man (saith Solomon) is satisfied from himself: He hath the pleasure of being wise, and acting reasonably; the pleasure of being justified to himself in what he doth, and of being acquitted by the sentence of his own mind. There is a great pleasure in being innocent, because that prevents guilt and trouble; It is pleasant to be vertuous and good, because that is to excel many others; and it is pleasant to grow better, because that is to excel our selves: Nay it is pleasant even to mortifie and subdue our lusts, because that is Victory: It is pleasant to command our appetites and passions, and to keep them in due order, within the bounds of Reason and Religion; because this is a kind of Empire, this is to govern. It is naturally pleasant to rule and have power over others but he is the great and the absolute Prince who commands himself. This is the Kingdom of God within us, a dominion infinitely to be preferred before all the Kingdoms of this world, and the glory of them. It is the Kingdom of God described by the Apostle, which consists in righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. In a word, the pleasure of being good and of doing good is the chief happiness of God himself.*

But



But now the wicked man deprives himself of all this pleasure, and creates perpetual discontent to his own mind. O the torments of a guilty conscience! which the sinner feels more or less all his life long. But, alas, thou dost not yet know the worst of it, no not in this World. What wilt thou do when thou comest to die? What comfort wilt thou then be able to give thy self? or what comfort can any one else give thee, when thy conscience is miserably rent and torn by those waking furies which will then rage in thy breast, and thou knowest not which way to turn thy self for ease; then, perhaps at last, the Priest is unwillingly sent for, to patch up thy conscience as well as he can, and to appease the cries of it; and to force himself out of very pity and good nature *to say peace, peace, when there is no peace.* But alas man! what can we do? what comfort can we give thee, when thine iniquities testify against thee to thy very face? *How can there be peace,* when thy lusts and debaucheries, thy impieties to God and thy injuries to men have been so many? *How can there be peace* when thy whole life hath been a continued contempt and provocation of Almighty God, and a perpetual violence and affront to the light and reason of thy own mind? There-

Therefore whatever temptation there may be in sin at a distance, whatever pleasure in the act and commission of it, yet remember that it always goes off with trouble, and *will be bitterness in the end.* Those words of Solomon have a terrible sting in the conclusion of them, *Rejoice O young man in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes; but know, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.*

This one thought which will very often unavoidably break into our minds (that *God will bring us into judgment*) is enough to dash all our contentment, and to spoil all the pleasure of a sinfull life. Never expect to be quiet in thine own mind, and to have the true enjoyment of thy self till thou li-vest a vertuous and religious life.

And if this discourse be true (as I am confident I have every mans conscience on my side) I say, if this be true, let us venture to be wise and happy, that is, to be Religious. Let us resolve to *break off our sins by repentance, to fear God and keep his Commandments*, as ever we desire to avoid the unspeakable torments of a guilty mind, and would not be perpetually uneasy to our selves.

Grant



## Sermon Fourth.

119

*Grant we beseech thee, Almighty God, that we may every one of us know and do in this our day the things that belong to our peace, before they be hid from our eyes. And the God of peace which brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, the great Shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the everlasting Covenant, make us perfect in every good work, to do his will, working in us always that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

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## SERMON

Preached before the

K I N G.

PSAL. CXIX. 59.

*I thought on my ways, and turned my  
feet unto thy testimonies.*

**T**HE two great causes of the ruin of men are *Infidelity*, and *want of consideration*. Some do not believe the principles of Religion, or at least have by arguing against them rendered them



them so doubtfull to themselves as to take away the force and efficacy of them : But these are but a very small part of mankind, in comparison of those who perish for want of considering these things. For most men take the principles of Religion for granted, *That there is a God, and a Providence, and a State of Rewards and Punishments after this life,* and never entertained any considerable doubt in their minds to the contrary : But for all this they never attended to the proper and natural consequences of these principles, nor applied them to their own case ; They never seriously considered the notorious inconsistency of their lives with this belief, and what manner of persons they ought to be who are verily perswaded of the truth of these things.

For no man that is convinced that there is a God, and considers the necessary and immediate consequences of such a persuasion, can think it safe to affront Him by a wicked life : No man that believes the infinite happiness and misery of another world, and considers withall that one of these shall certainly be his portion according as he demeans himself in this present life, can think it indifferent what course he takes. Men may thrust away these thoughts

thoughts and keep them out of their minds for a long time, but no man that enters into the serious consideration of these matters can possibly think it a thing indifferent to him whether he be happy or miserable for ever.

So that a great part of the evils of mens lives would be cured, if they would but once lay them to heart; would they but seriously consider the consequences of a wicked life, they would see so plain reason and so urgent a necessity for the reforming of it that they would not venture to continue any longer in it. This course *David* took here in the Text, and he found the happy success of it; *I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.*

In which words there are these two things considerable.

I. The course which *David* here took for the reforming of his life; *I thought on my ways.*

II. The success of this course. It produceth actual and speedy reformation; *I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies; I made haste and delayed not to keep thy commandments.*

These



These are the two heads of my following discourse, which when I have spoken to I shall endeavour to perswade my self and you to take the same course which *David* here did, and God grant that I may have the same effect.

I. We will consider *the course which David* here *took* for the reforming of his life; *I thought on my ways*, or, as the words are rendred in our old Translation, *I called my own ways to remembrance*. And this may either signifie a general survey and examination of his life, respecting indifferently the good or bad actions of it: Or else which is more probable, it may specially refer to the sins and miscarriages of his life; *I thought on my ways*, that is, I called my sins to remembrance. Neither of these senses can be much amiss in order to the effect mentioned in the Text, the reformation and amendment of our lives; and therefore neither of them can reasonably be excluded, though I shall principally insist upon the latter.

1. This *thinking on our ways* may signifie a general survey and examination of our lives, respecting indifferently our good and bad actions. For *Way* is a Metaphorical word, denoting the course of a  
mans

mans life and actions. *I thought on my ways*, that is, I examined my life and called my self to a strict account for the actions of it; I compared them with the Law of God the rule and measure of my duty, and considered how far I had obeyed that Law, or offended against it; how much evil I had been guilty of, and how little good I had done in comparison of what I might and ought to have done: That by this means I might come to understand the true state and condition of my soul, and discerning how many and great my faults and defects were I might amend whatever was amiss and be more carefull of my duty for the future.

And it must needs be a thing of excellent use for men to set apart some particular times for the examination of themselves, that they may know how accounts stand between God and them. *Pythagoras* (or whoever were the Author of those *golden verses* which pass under his name) doth especially recommend this practice to his Scholars, every night before they slept to call themselves to account for the actions of the day past; enquiring wherein they had transgressed, what good they had done that day, or omitted to do. And this no doubt is an admirable means  
to



to improve men in vertue, a most effectual way to keep our consciences continually waking and tender, and to make us stand in awe of our selves, and afraid to sin when we know before-hand that we must give so severe an account to our selves of every action.

And certainly it is a great piece of wisdom to make up our accounts as frequently as we can, that our repentance may in some measure keep pace with the errors and failings of our lives, and that we may not be oppressed and confounded by the insupportable weight of the sins of a whole life falling upon us at once; and that perhaps at the very worst time, when we are sick and weak, and have neither understanding nor leisure to recollect our selves, and to call our sins distinctly to remembrance, much less to exercise any fit and proper acts of repentance for them. For there is nothing to be done in Religion when our Reason is once departed from us; then darkness hath overtaken us indeed, and *the night is come when no man can work*. But though we were never so sensible and should do all we can at that time, yet after all this how it will go with us God alone knows. I am sure it is too much presumption for any man to be

be confident that one general and confused act of repentance will serve his turn for the sins of his whole life. Therefore there is great reason why we should often examine our selves, both in order to the amendment of our lives, and the ease of our consciences when we come to die.

2. This *thinking of our ways* may particularly and specially refer to the sins and miscarriages of our lives: *I thought on my ways*, that is, I called my sins to remembrance; I took a particular account of the errors of my life, and laid them seriously to heart; I considered all the circumstances and consequences of them, and all other things belonging to them; and reasoning the matter thoroughly with my self, came to a peremptory and fixed resolution of breaking off this wicked course of life, and betaking my self to the obedience of God's Laws. And the *consideration of our ways* taken in this sense (which seems to be the more probable meaning of the words) may reasonably imply in it these following particulars.

1. The taking of a particular account of our sins, together with the several circumstances and aggravations of them.



2. A hearty trouble and sorrow for them; *I thought on my ways*, that is, I laid them sadly to heart.

3. A serious consideration of the evil and unreasonableness of a sinfull course.

4. A due sense of the fearfull and fatal consequences of a wicked life.

5. A full conviction of the necessity of quitting this course.

6. An apprehension of the possibility of doing this.

1. *The taking of a particular account of our sins, together with the several circumstances and aggravations of them.* And to this end we may do well to reflect particularly upon the several stages and periods of our lives, and to recollect at least the principal miscarriages belonging to each of them. And the better to enable us hereto it will be usefull to have before our eyes some abridgment or summary of the Laws of God, containing the chief heads of our duties and sins, of vertues and vices; For this will help to bring many of our faults and neglects to our remembrance, which otherwise perhaps would have been forgotten by us. We should likewise consider the several relations wherein we have stood to others, and how far we have transgressed

fed or failed of our duty in any of these respects.

And having thus far made up our sad account, we may in a great measure understand the number and greatness of our sins; abating for some particulars which are slipp'd out of our memory, and for sins of ignorance, and daily infirmities, which are innumerable. By all which we may see what vile wretches and grievous offenders we have been; especially if we take into consideration the several heavy circumstances of our sins, which do above measure aggravate them; the heinousness of many of them as to their nature, and the injurious consequences of them to the person, or estate, or reputation of our neighbour; their having been committed against the clear knowledge of our duty, against the frequent checks and convictions of our consciences, telling us when we did them that we did amiss; against so many motions and suggestions of God's Holy Spirit, so many admonitions and reproofs from others; and contrary to our own most serious vows and resolutions, renewed at several times, especially upon the receiving of the blessed Sacrament, and in times of sickness and distress: and all this notwithstanding the plainest declarations



rations of God's will to the contrary, notwithstanding the terrors of the Lord and the wrath of God revealed from Heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men; notwithstanding the cruel sufferings of the Son of God for our sins, and the most mercifull offers of pardon and reconciliation in his blood. Add to this the scandal of our wicked lives to our holy Religion, the ill example of them to the corrupting and debauching of others, the affront of them to the Divine Authority, and the horrible ingratitude of them to the mercy and goodness and patience of God to which we have such infinite obligations. Thus we should set our sins in order before our eyes with the several aggravations of them.

2. A hearty *trouble* and *sorrow* for sin; *I thought on my ways*, that is, I laid my sins sadly to heart. And surely whenever we remember the faults and follies of our lives, we cannot but be inwardly touched and sensibly grieved at the thoughts of them; we cannot but hang down our heads, and smite upon our breasts, and be in pain and heaviness at our very hearts. I know that the tempers of men are very different, and therefore I do not say that tears are  
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absolutely necessary to repentance, but they do very well become it; and a thorough sense of sin will almost melt the most hard and obdurate disposition, and fetch water out of a very rock. To be sure the consideration of our ways should cause inward trouble and confusion in our minds. The least we can do when we have done amiss is to be sorry for it, to condemn our own folly, and to be full of indignation and displeasure against our selves for what we have done, and to resolve never to do the like again. And let us make sure that our trouble and sorrow for sin have this effect, *to make us leave our sins*; and then we shall need to be the less solicitous about the degrees and outward expressions of it.

3. *A serious consideration of the evil and unreasonableness of a sinfull course.* That sin is the stain and blemish of our natures, the reproach of our reason and understanding, the disease and the deformity of our souls, the great enemy of our peace, the cause of all our fears and troubles: That whenever we do a wicked action we go contrary to the clearest dictates of our reason and conscience, to our plain and true interest, and to the strongest ties and obligations of duty and gratitude. And which



which renders it yet more unreasonable, sin is a voluntary evil which men wilfully bring upon themselves. Other evils may be forced upon us, whether we will or no ; a man may be poor or sick by misfortune, but no man is wicked and vitious but by his own choice. How do we betray our folly and weakness by suffering our selves to be hurried away by every foolish lust and passion to do things which we know to be prejudicial and hurtfull to our selves. And so base and unworthy in themselves that we are ashamed to do them, not onely in the presence of a wise man, but even of a child or a fool. So that if sin were followed with no other punishment besides the guilt of having done a shamefull thing, a man would not by intemperance make himself a fool and a beast ; one would not be false and unjust, treacherous or unthankfull, if for no other reason, yet out of meer greatness and generosity of mind, out of respect to the dignity of his nature, and out of very reverence to his own reason and understanding. For let witty men say what they will in defence of their Vices, there are so many natural acknowledgments of the evil and unreasonableness of sin that the matter is past all denial :

Men are generally galled and uneasie at the thoughts of an evil action, both before and after they have committed it; they are ashamed to be taken in a Crime, and heartily vexed and provoked whenever they are upbraided with it; and 'tis very observable, that though the greater part of the world always was bad, and Vice hath ever had more servants and followers to cry it up, yet never was there any Age so degenerate, in which Vice could get the better of Vertue in point of general esteem and reputation: Even they whose wills have been most enslaved to sin, could never yet so far bribe and corrupt their understandings as to make them give full approbation to it.

4. *A due sense of the fearfull and fatal consequences of a wicked life.* And these are so sad and dreadfull, and the danger of them so evident and so perpetually threatning us, that no temptation can be sufficient to excuse a man to himself and his own reason for venturing upon them. A principal point of wisdom is to look to the End of things; not onely to consider the present pleasure and advantage of any thing, but also the ill consequences of it for the future, and to ballance them one against the other.

Now



Now sin in its own nature tends to make men miserable. It certainly causes trouble and diquiet of mind: And to a considerate man, that knows how to value the ease and satisfaction of his own mind, there cannot be a greater argument against sin than to consider that the forsaking of it is the onely way to find rest to our souls.

Besides this, every Vice is naturally attended with some particular mischief and inconvenience, which maketh it even in this life a punishment to it self; and commonly the providence of God and his just judgment upon Sinners strikes in to heighten the mischievous consequences of a sinfull course. This we have represented in the Parable of the Prodigal; his riotous course of life did naturally and of it self bring him to want, but the providence of God likewise concurred to render his condition more miserable, *at the same time there arose a mighty Famine in the Land*; so that he did not onely want wherewithal to supply himself, but was cut off from all hopes of relief from the abundance and superfluity of others. Sin brings many miseries upon us, and God many times sends more and greater than sin brings; and the further we go on in a sinfull course,

the more miseries and the greater difficulties we involve our selves in.

But all these are but light and inconsiderable in comparison of the dreadful miseries of another World ; to the danger whereof every man that lives a wicked life doth every moment expose himself: So that if we could conquer shame, and had stupidity enough to bear the infamy and reproach of our vices, and the upbraidings of our consciences for them, and the temporal mischiefs and inconveniences of them ; though for the present gratifying of our lusts we could brook and dispence with all these, yet the consideration of the end and issue of a sinfull course is an invincible objection against it and never to be answered ; though the violence of our sensual appetites and inclinations should be able to bear down all temporal considerations whatsoever, yet methinks the interest of our everlasting happiness should lie near our hearts ; the consideration of another world should mightily amaze and startle us ; the horrors of eternal darkness and the dismal thoughts of being miserable for ever should effectually discourage any man from a wicked life. And this danger continually threatens the sinner, and may if God be  
not



not mercifull to him happen to surprize him the next moment. And can we make too much haste to fly from so great and apparent a danger? When will we think of saving our selves, if not when (for ought we know) we are upon the very brink of ruine and just ready to drop into destruction?

5. Upon this naturally follows *a full conviction of the necessity of quitting this wicked course.* And necessity is always a powerfull and over-ruling argument, and doth rather compel than perswade: and after it is once evident leaves no place for further deliberation. And the greater the necessity is, it is still the more cogent argument. For whatever is necessary is so in order to some end, and the greater the end the greater is the necessity of the means without which that end cannot be obtained. Now the chief and last end of all Reasonable Creatures is happiness, and therefore whatever is necessary in order to that hath the highest degree of rational and moral necessity. We are not capable of happiness till we have left our sins, for *without holiness no man shall see the Lord.*

But though men are convinced of this necessity, yet this doth not always enforce

a present change; because men hope they may continue in their sins, and remedy all at last by repentance. But this is so great a hazard in all respects that there is no venturing upon it. And in matters of greatest concernment wise men will run no hazards if they can help it. *David* was so sensible of this danger, that he would not defer his repentance and the change of his life for one moment; *I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies: I made haste and delayed not to keep thy Commandment.* This day, this hour for ought we know may be the last opportunity of making our peace with God. Therefore we should make haste out of this dangerous state as *Lot* did out of *Sodom*, lest fire and brimstone overtake us. He that cannot promise himself the next moment hath a great deal of reason to seize upon the present opportunity. While we are *lingering* in our sins, if God be not mercifull to us we shall be consumed. Therefore *make haste sinner and escape for thy life, lest evil overtake thee.*

6. Lastly, an apprehension of the possibility of making this change. God who designed us for happiness at first, and after we had made a forfeiture of it by sin

was



was pleased to restore us again to the capacity of it by the Redemption of our blessed Lord and Saviour, hath made nothing necessary to our happiness that is impossible for us to do, either of our selves, or by the assistance of that grace which he is ready to afford us if we heartily beg it of him. For that is possible to us which we may do by the assistance of another, if we may have that assistance for asking: And God hath promised to *give his holy Spirit to them that ask him.* So that notwithstanding the great corruption and weakness of our natures, since the grace of God which brings salvation hath appeared, it is not absolutely out of our power to leave our sins and to turn to God: For that may truly be said to be in our power which God hath promised to enable us to do, if we be not wanting to our selves.

So that there is nothing on God's part to hinder this change. He hath solemnly declared that he sincerely desires it, and that he is ready to assist our good resolutions to this purpose. And most certainly when he tells us, that *he hath no pleasure in the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live; that he would have all men to be saved, and*  
to

*to come to the knowledge of the truth; that he would not that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance:* He means plainly as he saith, and doth not speak to us with any private reserve or nice distinction between his secret and revealed will, that is, he doth not decree one thing and declare the contrary. So far is it from this, that if a sinner entertain serious thoughts of returning to God and do but once move towards him, how ready is he to receive him! This is in a very lively manner described to us in the Parable of the *Prodigal Son*, who when he was returning home, and *was yet a great way off*, what haste doth his Father make to meet him? *he saw him, and had compassion, and ran.* And if there be no impediment on God's part, why should there be any on ours? One would think all the doubt and difficulty should be on the other side, Whether God would be pleased to shew mercy to such great offenders as we have been. But the business doth not stick there. And will we be miserable by our own choice, when the Grace of God hath put it into our power to be happy? I have done with the first thing, The course which *David* here took for the reforming of his life; *I thought on my ways.* I proceed to the

II. *The*



II. *The success of this course.* It produced actual and speedy reformation. *I turned my feet unto thy testimonies; I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy Commandments.* And if we consider the matter thoroughly, and have but patience to reason out the case with our selves and to bring our thoughts and deliberations to some issue, the conclusion must naturally be the quitting of that evil and dangerous course in which we have lived. For sin and consideration cannot long dwell together. Did but men consider what sin is, they would have so many unanswerable Objections against it, such strong fears and jealousies of the miserable issue and event of a wicked life, that they would not dare to continue any longer in it.

I do not say, that this change is perfectly made at once. A state of sin and holiness are not like two Ways that are just parted by a line, so as a man may step out of the one full into the other; but they are like two Ways that lead to two very distant places, and consequently are at a good distance from one another, and the farther any man hath travelled in the one the farther he is from the other; so that it requires time and pains to pass from the one to the other; It sometimes so happens,  
that

that some persons are by a mighty conviction and resolution, and by a very extraordinary and overpowering degree of God's grace, almost perfectly reclaimed from their sins at once, and all of a sudden *translated out of the Kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of his dear Son.* And thus it was with many of the first Converts to Christianity; as their prejudices against the Christian Religion were strong and violent, so the holy Spirit of God was pleased to work mightily in them that believed. But in the usual and settled methods of God's grace evil habits are mastered and subdued by degrees, and with a great deal of conflict, and many times after they are routed they rally and make head again; and 'tis a great while before the contrary habits of grace and virtue are grown up to any considerable degree of strength and maturity, and before a man come to that confirmed state of goodness that he may be said to have conquered and mortified his lusts. But yet this ought not to discourage us. For so soon as we have seriously begun this change we are in a good way, and all our endeavours will have the acceptance of good beginnings, and God will be ready to help us; and if we pursue our advantages



tages we shall every day gain ground, and the work will grow easier upon our hands; and we who moved at first with so much slowness and difficulty shall after a while be enabled to run the ways of God's commandments with pleasure and delight.

I have done with the two things I propounded to speak to from these words, This *course* here prescribed, and the *success* of it. And now to perswade men to take this *course*, I shall offer two or three Arguments.

1. That Consideration is the proper act of Reasonable Creatures. This argument God himself uses, to bring men to a consideration of their evil ways. *Isa. 46.8. Remember, and shew your selves men; bring it again to mind, O ye transgressors.* To consider our ways and to call our sins to remembrance, is to shew our selves men. 'Tis the great fault and infelicity of a great many, that they generally live without thinking, and are acted by their present inclinations and appetites without any consideration of the future consequences of things, and without fear of any thing but of a present and sensible danger; like Brute Creatures, who fear no evils but what are in view and just ready to fall upon them: Whereas to a prudent and considerate

siderate man a good or evil in reversion is capable of as true an estimation, proportionably to the greatness and distance of it, as if it were really present. And what do we think has God given us our reason and understandings for, but to fore-see evils at a distance, and to prevent them, to provide for our future security and happiness, to look up *to God our Maker, who hath taught us more than the Beasts of the earth, and made us wiser than the Fowls of heaven*; but to consider what we do, and what we ought to do, and what makes most for our future and lasting interest, and what against it? What can a Beast do worse than to act without any consideration and design, than to pursue his present inclination without any apprehension of true danger? The most dull and stupid of all the brute Creatures can hardly exercise less reason than this comes to. So that for a man not to consider his ways is to the very best intents and purposes to be *without understanding, and like the beasts that perish.*

2. This is the end of God's patience and long suffering towards us, to bring us to consideration. The great design of God's goodness is to *lead men to repentance. He winks at the sins of men, that they may repent.*



*repent.* He bears long with us, and delays the punishment of our sins, and doth not execute judgment speedily, because he is loth to surprize men into destruction; because he would give them the liberty of second thoughts, time to reflect upon themselves, and to consider what they have done, and to reason themselves into repentance. *Consider this all ye that forget God, lest his patience turn into fury, and he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver you.*

3. Consideration is that which we must all come to one time or other. Time will come when we shall consider and cannot help it, when we shall not be able to divert our thoughts from those things which we are now so loth to think upon. Our Consciences will take their opportunity to bring our ways to remembrance, when some great calamity or affliction is upon us. Thus it was with the Prodigal, when he was brought to the very last extremity and *was ready to perish with hunger, then he came to himself.* When we come to die, then we shall think of our ways with trouble and vexation enough; And how glad would we then be that we had time to consider them? And perhaps while we are wishing for more time Eternity will  
swal-

swallow us up. To be sure in the other world, a great part of the misery of wicked men will consist in furious reflections upon themselves and the evil actions of their lives. 'Tis said of the *Rich* voluptuous man in the *Parable*, that *in hell he lift up his eyes being in torment*; as if he had never considered and bethought himself till that time. But alas! it will then be too late to consider: For then consideration will do us no good; it will serve to no other purpose but to aggravate our misery, and to multiply our stings, and to give new life and rage to those Vultures which will perpetually prey upon our hearts. But how much a wiser course would it be to consider these things in time, in order to our eternal peace and comfort; to think of them while we may redress them and avoid the dismal consequences of them, than when our case is desperate and past remedy?

And now what can I say more to persuade every one of us to a consideration of our *own ways*? We are generally apt to busie our selves in observing the errours and miscarriages of our Neighbours, and are forward to mark and censure the faults and follies of other men; but how few descend into themselves, and turn their eyes



eyes inward, and say *What have I done ?* 'Tis an excellent saying of *Antonius* the great *Emperour* and *Philosopher*, *No man was ever unhappy for not prying into the actions and condition of other men, but that man is necessarily unhappy who doth not observe himself and consider the state of his own soul.*

This is our proper work ; and now is a proper season for it, when we pretend to God and men to set a part a solemn time for the examination of our selves, and for a serious review of our lives in order to humiliation and repentance, to the reforming and amendment of what is amiss. And though we would venture to dissemble with men, yet let us not dissemble with God also ; *For shall not he that pondereth the heart consider it ; and he that keepeth the soul, shall not he know it ; and shall not he render to every man according to his ways ?*

I know it is a very unpleasant work which I am now putting you upon, and therefore no wonder that men are generally so backward to it ; because it will of necessity give some present disturbance to their minds. They whose lives have been very vicious are so odious a sight, so horrid a spectacle to themselves, that they

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cannot endure to reflect upon their own ways ; of all things in the world they hate Consideration, and are ready to say to it as the evil Spirit did in the Gospel to our Saviour, *What have I to do with thee ? Art thou come to torment me before the time ?* But let not this affright us from it ; for whatever trouble it may cause at present, it is the onely way to prevent the anguish and the torments of Eternity.

The things which I have offered to your consideration are of huge moment and importance. They do not concern your bodies and estates, but that which is more truly your selves, your immortal souls, the dearest and most durable part of your selves: and they do not concern us for a little while, but for ever. Let me therefore bespeak your most serious regard to them in the words of *Moses* to the people of *Israel*, after he had set the Law of God before them together with the blessings promised to obedience and the terrible Curse threatned to the transgression of it, *Deut. 32. 46. Set your hearts to the words which I testifie to you this day, for it is not a vain thing, because it is your life. Your life, your eternal life and happiness depends upon it.*

And



And besides a tender regard to your selves and your own interests, which methinks every man out of a natural desire of being happy and dread of being miserable should be forward enough to consider : Be pleased likewise to lay to heart the influence of your example upon others. I speak now to a great many persons, the eminence of whose rank and quality renders their examples so powerfull as to be able almost to give authority either to Vertue or Vice. People take their fashions from you, as to the habits of their minds aswell as their bodies. So that upon you chiefly depends the ruine or reformation of manners, our hopes or despair of a better world. What way soever you go you are followed by troops. If you run any sinfull or dangerous course, you cannot *perish alone in your iniquity, but thousands will fall by your side, and ten thousands at your right hands*: And on the contrary, 'tis very much in your power, and I hope in your wills and designs, to be the sovereign restorers of Piety and Vertue to a degenerate Age. It is *our* part indeed to exhort men to their duty, but 'tis *you* that would be the powerfull and effectual preachers of righteousness. We may endeavour to make men profelytes to

vertue, but you would infallibly draw disciples after you: We may try to persuade, but you could certainly prevail, either to make men good, or to restrain them from being so bad.

Therefore consider your ways, for the sake of others aswell as your selves. Consider what you have done, and then consider what is fit for you to do, and if you do it not what will be the end of these things? And to help you forward in this work it is not necessary that I should rip up the vices of the Age, and set mens sins in order before them. It is much better that you your selves should call your own ways to remembrance. We have every one a faithfull Monitor and Witness in our own breasts who, if we will but hearken to him, will deal impartially with us, and privately tell us the errors of our lives. To this Monitor I refer you, and to the grace of God, to make these admonitions effectual.

Let us then every one of us, in the fear of God, *search and try our ways, and turn unto the Lord.* Let us *take to our selves words, and say* to God with those true Penitents in Scripture, *I have sinned, what shall be done unto thee, O thou Preserver of men? Behold, I am vile, what shall I*  
answer



*answer thee ? I will lay my hand upon my mouth, I will abhor my self, and repent in dust and ashes. For surely it is meet to be said unto God, I will not offend any more ; that which I know not teach thou me, and if I have done iniquity I will do no more. O that there were such an heart in us ! O that we were wise, that we understood this, that we would consider our latter end ! And God of his infinite mercy inspire into every one of our hearts this holy and happy resolution, for the sake of our blessed Saviour and Redeemer, to whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost be all honour and glory now and for ever, Amen.*

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## Pfal. CXIX. 60.

*I made haste, and delayed not to  
keep thy Commandments.*

**I**N the words immediately going before you have the course which *David* took for the reforming of his life, and the success of that course; *I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy Testimonies.* A serious reflection upon the past errors and miscarriages of his life produced the reformation of it. And you have a considerable circumstance added in these words that I have now read to you, that this reformation was speedy and without delay, *I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy Commandments.* Upon due consideration of his former life, and a full conviction of the necessity of a change, he came to a resolution of a better life, and immediately put this resolution in execution; and to declare how presently and quickly



quickly he did it he expresses it both affirmatively and negatively, after the manner of the *Hebrews* who when they would say a thing with great certainty and *Emphasis* are wont to express it both ways, *I made haste, and delayed not*; that is, I did with all imaginable speed betake myself to a better course.

And this is the natural effect of consideration; and the true cause why men delay so necessary a work is, because they stifle their reason and suffer themselves to be hurried into the embraces of present Objects, and do not consider their latter end and what will be the sad issue and event of a wicked life. For if men would take an impartial view of their lives, and but now and then reflect upon themselves and lay to heart the miserable and fatal consequences of a sinfull course, and think whither it will bring them at last and that the end of these things will be death and misery: If the carnal and sensual person would but look about him and consider how many have been ruin'd in the way that he is in, how many lie *slain and wounded in it, that it is the way to hell, and leads down to the chambers of death*, this would certainly give a check to him and stop him in his course.

For it is not to be imagined but that *that* man who hath duly considered what sin is, the shortness of its pleasures and the eternity of its punishment, should resolve immediately to break off his sins and to live another kind of life. Would any man be intemperate and walk after the flesh, would any man be unjust and defraud or oppress his Neighbour, be profane and live in the contempt of God and Religion, or allow himself in any wicked course whatsoever, that considers and believes a Judgment to come, and that because of these things the terrible vengeance of God will one day fall upon the Children of Disobedience? It is not credible that men who apply themselves seriously to the meditation of these matters should venture to continue in so imprudent and dangerous a course, or could by any temptation whatsoever be trained on one step farther in a Way that does so certainly and visibly lead to ruine and destruction.

So that my work at this time shall be, to endeavour to convince men of the monstrous folly and unreasonableness of delaying the reformation and amendment of their lives; and to persuade us to resolve upon it, and having resolved, to set about it immediately and without delay;



in imitation of the good man here in the Text, *I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments.* And to this end, I shall

*First*, Consider the reasons and excuses which men pretend for delaying this necessary work, and shew the unreasonableness of them.

*Secondly*, I shall add some farther Considerations to engage us effectually to set about this work speedily and without delay.

I. We will consider a little the reasons and excuses which men pretend for delaying this necessary work; and not onely shew the unreasonableness of them, but that they are each of them a strong reason and powerfull argument to the contrary.

1. Many pretend that they are abundantly convinced of the great necessity of leaving their sins and betaking themselves to a better course, and they fully intend to do so; onely they cannot at present bring themselves to it, but they hope hereafter to be in a better temper and disposition, and then they resolve by God's grace to set about this work in good earnest, and to go through with it.

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I know not whether it be fit to call this a Reason ; I am sure it is the greatest cheat and delusion that any man can put upon himself. For this plainly shews that thou dost not intend to do this which thou art convinced is so necessary, but to put it off from day to day. For there is no greater evidence that a man doth not really intend to do a thing, than when notwithstanding he ought upon all accounts and may in all respects better do it at present than hereafter, yet he still puts it off. Whatever thou pretendest this is a meer shift to get rid of a present trouble. It is like giving good words and making fair promises to a clamorous and importunate creditor, and appointing him to come another day, when the man knows in his conscience that he intends not to pay him, and that he shall be less able to discharge the debt then, than he is at present. Whatever reasons thou hast against reforming thy life now will still remain and be in as full force hereafter, nay probably stronger than they are at present. Thou art unwilling now, and so thou wilt be hereafter, and in all likelihood much more unwilling. So that this reason will every day improve upon thy hands, and have so much the more strength by how much  
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the longer thou continuest in thy sins. Thou hast no reason in the world against the present time but onely that 'tis *present*; why when hereafter comes to be present the reason will be just the same. So that thy present unwillingness is so far from being a just reason against it, that 'tis a good reason the other way; because thou art unwilling now, and like to be so, nay more so hereafter; if thou intendest to do it at all thou shouldest set about it immediately, and without delay.

2. Another reason which men pretend for the delaying of this work is the great difficulty and unpleasantness of it. And it cannot be denied but that there will be some bitterness and uneasiness in it, proportionably to the growth of evil habits, and the strength of our lusts, and our greater or less progress and continuance in a sinfull course: So that we must make account of a sharp conflict, of some pain and trouble in the making of this change, that it will cost us some pangs and throws before we be born again. For when nature hath been long bent another way, it is not to be expected that it should be reduced and brought back to its first straightness without pain and violence.

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But then it is to be considered, that how difficult and painfull soever this work be it is necessary, and that should overrule all other considerations whatsoever; that if we will not be at this pains and trouble, we must one time or other endure far greater than those which we now seek to avoid; that it is not so difficult as we imagine, but our fears of it are greater than the trouble will prove; if we were but once resolved upon the work, and seriously engaged in it, the greatest part of the trouble were over; it is like the fear of children to go into the cold water, a faint trial increaseth their fear and apprehension of it; but so soon as they have plunged into it the trouble is over, and then they wonder why they were so much afraid. The main difficulty and unpleasantness is in our first entrance into Religion; it presently grows tolerable, and soon after easie, and after that by degrees so pleasant and delightfull that the man would not for all the world return to his former evil state and condition of life.

We should consider likewise what is the true cause of all this trouble and difficulty; 'Tis our long continuance in a sinfull course that hath made us so loth to leave it; 'Tis the custom of sinning that renders it



it so troublesome and uneasie to men to do otherwise: 'Tis the greatness of our guilt, heightned and inflamed by many and repeated provocations, that doth so gall our consciences and fill our souls with so much terror; 'Tis because we have gone so far in an evil way that our retreat is become so difficult, and because we have delayed this work so long that we are now so unwilling to go about it; and consequently, the longer we delay it the trouble and difficulty of a change will encrease daily upon us. And all these considerations are so far from being a good reason for more delays, that they are a strong argument to the contrary: Because the work is difficult now, therefore do not make it more so; and because your delays have encreased the difficulty of it, and will do more and more, therefore delay no longer.

3. Another pretended encouragement to these delays is the great mercy and patience of God. He commonly bears longer with sinners, and therefore there is no such absolute and urgent necessity of a speedy repentance and reformation of our lives. Men have not the face to give this for a reason, but yet for all that it lies at the bottom of many mens hearts: So *Solomon*

*lomon* tells us, *Eccles. 8. 11. Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the hearts of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.*

But it is not always thus. There are few of us but have seen several instances of God's severity to sinners, and have known several persons surprized by a sudden hand of God, and cut off in the very act of sin without having the least respite given them, without time or liberty so much as to ask God forgiveness, and to consider either what they had done, or whither they were going. And this may be the case of any sinner, and is so much the more likely to be thy case because thou dost so boldly presume upon the mercy and patience of God.

But if it were always thus, and thou wert sure to be spared yet a while longer; what can be more unreasonable and disingenuous than to resolve to be evil because God is good, and because he suffers so long to sin so much the longer, and because he affords thee a space of repentance therefore to delay it and put it off to the last? The proper design of God's goodness is to lead men to repentance, and he never intended his patience for an encouragement to men to continue in their sins,



sins, but for an opportunity and an argument to break them off by repentance.

These are the pretended reasons and encouragements to men to delay their repentance and the reformation of their lives, and you see how groundless and unreasonable they are; which was the *first* thing I propounded to speak to.

II. I shall add some further considerations, to engage men effectually to set about this work speedily, and without delay. And because they are many I shall insist upon those which are most weighty and considerable, without being very curious and solicitous about the method and order of them: For provided they be but effectual to the end of perswasion, it matters not how inartificially they are ranged and disposed.

I. Consider, that in matters of great and necessary concernment, and which must be done, there is no greater argument of a weak and impotent mind than irresolution; to be undermin'd where the case is so plain and the necessity so urgent, to be always about doing that which we are convinced must be done.

*Victuros*

*Victuros agimus semper, nec vivimus unquam.*

We are always intending to live a new life, but can never find a time to set about it. This is as if a man should put off eating and drinking and sleeping from one day and night to another, till he have starved and destroyed himself. It seldom falls under any mans deliberation whether he should live or not, if he can chuse; and if he cannot chuse, 'tis in vain to deliberate about it. It is much more absurd to deliberate whether we should live vertuously or religiously, soberly and righteously in the world, for *that* upon the matter is to consult whether a man should be happy or not: Nature hath determined this for us, and we need not reason about it; and consequently, we ought not to delay that which we are convinced is so necessary in order to it.

2. Consider that Religion is a great and a long work, and asks so much time that there is none left for the delaying of it. To begin with Repentance, which is commonly our first entrance into Religion; This alone is a great work, and is not onely the business of a sudden thought and resolution but of execution and action:

'Tis



'Tis the abandoning of a sinfull course, which we cannot leave till we have in some degree mastered our lusts; for so long as they are our Masters, like *Pharaoh*, they will keep us in bondage and *not let us go to serve the Lord*. The habits of sin and vice are not to be plucked up and cast off at once; as they have been long in contracting, so without a miracle it will require a competent time to subdue them and get the victory over them; for they are conquered just by the same degrees that the habits of grace and vertue grow up and get strength in us.

So that there are several duties to be done in Religion, and often to be repeated; many graces and vertues are to be long practised and exercised before the contrary vices will be subdued, and before we arrive to a confirmed and settled state of goodness; such a state as can onely give us a clear and comfortable evidence of the sincerity of our resolution and repentance, and of our good condition towards God. We have many lusts to mortifie, many passions to govern and bring into order; much good to do, to make what amends and reparation we can for the much evil we have done: We have many things to learn; and many to unlearn,

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to which we shall be strongly prompted by the corrupt inclinations of our nature, and the remaining power of ill habits and customs: and perhaps we have satisfaction and restitution to make for the many injuries we have done to others, in their persons, or estates, or reputations: In a word, we have a *body of sin* to put off, which clings close to us and is hard to part with; we have to *cleanse our selves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God*; to encrease and improve our graces and virtues; to *add to our faith knowledge, and temperance, and patience, and brotherly kindness, and charity*; and to *abound in all the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ to the praise and glory of God*: We have to be usefull to the world, and exemplary to others in a holy and vertuous conversation; our *light is so to shine before men, that others may see our good works, and glorifie our Father which is in Heaven*.

And do we think all this is to be done in an instant, and requires no time? That we may delay and put off to the last, and yet do all this work well enough? Do we think we can do all this in time of sickness and old age, when we are not fit to do any thing; when *the spirit of a man*  
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can hardly *bear the infirmities* of nature, much less a guilty conscience and a *wounded spirit*? Do we think that when the day hath been idely spent and squandred away by us, that we shall be fit to work when the night and darkness comes? When our understanding is weak, and our memory frail, and our will crooked, and by a long custome of sinning obstinately bent the wrong way, what can we then do in Religion? What reasonable or acceptable service can we then perform to God? When our candle is just sinking into the socket, how shall *our light so shine before men, that others may see our good works*?

Alas! the longest life is no more than sufficient for a man to reform himself in, to repent of the errors of his life, and to amend what is amiss: to put our souls into a good posture and preparation for another world, to train up our selves for eternity, and to make our selves *meet to be made partakers of the inheritance of the Saints in light*.

3. Consider what a desperate hazard we run by these delays. Every delay of repentance is a venturing the main chance. It is uncertain whether hereafter we shall have time for it, and if we have time

whether we shall have a heart to it, and the assistance of God's grace to go thorough with it. God indeed hath been graciously pleased to promise pardon to repentance, but he hath no where promised life and leisure, the aids of his grace and holy Spirit to those who put off their repentance: He hath no where promised acceptance to meer sorrow and trouble for sin, without *fruits meet for repentance, and amendment of life*: He hath no where promised to receive them to mercy and favour who onely give him good words, and are at last contented to condescend so far to him as to promise to leave their sins when they can keep them no longer. Many have gone thus far in times of affliction and sickness, as to be awakened to a great sense of their sins, and to be mightily troubled for their wicked lives, and to make solemn promises and professions of becoming better; and yet upon their deliverance and recovery all hath vanished and come to nothing, and their *righteousness hath been as the morning cloud, and as the early dew which passeth away*: And why should any man, meerly upon account of a death-bed repentance, reckon himself in a better condition than those persons who have done as much and  
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gone as far as he; and there is no other difference between them but this, that the repentance of the former was tried and proved insincere, but the *death-bed repentance* never came to a trial; and yet for all that God knows whether it were sincere or not, and how it would have proved if the man had lived longer. Why should any man for offering up to God the meer refuse and dregs of his life, and the days *which himself hath no pleasure in*, expect to receive the reward of eternal life and happiness at his hands?

But though we do not design to delay this work so long, yet ought we to consider that all delays in a matter of this consequence are extremely dangerous; because we put off a business of the greatest concernment to the future, and in so doing put it to the hazard whether ever it shall be done: For the future is as much out of our power to command, as it is to call back the time which is past. Indeed if we could arrest time and strike off the nimble wheels of his Chariot, and like *Joshua* bid the Sun stand still, and make opportunity tarry as long as he had occasion for it; this were something to excuse our delay, or at least to mitigate and abate the folly and unreasonableness of it: But

this we cannot do. It is in our power, under the influence of God's grace and holy Spirit, to amend our lives now, but it is not in our power to live till to morrow; and who will part with an estate in hand, which he may presently enter upon the possession of, for an uncertain reversion? And yet thus we deal in the great and everlasting concerns of our souls; we trifle away the present opportunities of salvation, and vainly promise to our selves the future; we let go that which is in our power, and fondly dispose of that which is out of our power, and in the hands of God.

Lay hold then upon the present opportunities, and look upon every action thou doest, and every opportunity of doing any, as possibly thy last; for so it may prove, for any thing thou canst tell to the contrary. If a mans life lay at stake and he had but one throw for it, with what care and with what concernment would he manage that action? What thou art doing next may, for ought thou knowest, be for thy life, and for all eternity. So much of thy life is most certainly past, and God knows thou hast yet done little or nothing towards the securing of thy future happiness: It is not certain how much or how little



little is remaining, therefore be sure to make the best use of that little which may be left, and wisely to manage the last stake.

4. Seeing the delay of repentance doth mainly rely upon the hopes and encouragement of a future repentance, let us consider a little how unreasonable these hopes are, and how absurd the encouragement is which men take from them. To sin in hopes that hereafter we shall repent, is to do a thing in hopes that we shall one day be mightily ashamed of it, that we shall one time or other be heartily grieved and troubled that we have done it: It is to do a thing in hopes that we shall afterwards condemn our selves for it, and wish a thousand times we had never done it; in hopes that we shall be full of horror at the thoughts of what we have done, and shall treasure up so much guilt in our consciences as will make us a terrour to our selves, and be ready to drive us even to despair and distraction. And is this a reasonable hope? Is this a fitting encouragement for a wise man to give to himself, to any action? And yet this is plainly the true meaning of mens going on in their sins, in hopes that hereafter they shall repent of them.

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5. If you be still resolved to delay this business and put it off at present consider well with your selves how long you intend to delay it. I hope not to the last, not till sickness come and death make his approaches to you. This is next to madness, to venture all upon such an aftergame. 'Tis just as if a man should be content to be shipwrackt, in hope that he shall afterwards escape by a plank and get safe to shore. But I hope none are so unreasonable, yet I fear that many have a mind to put it off to old age, though they do not care to say so. *Seneca* expostulates excellently with this sort of men ; *Who shall ensure thy life till that time ? Who shall pass his word for thee, that the providence of God will suffer all things to happen and fall out just as thou hast designed and forecast them ? Art thou not ashamed to reserve the reliques of thy life for thy self, and to set apart onely that time to be wise and vertuous in which is good for nothing ? How late is it then to begin to live well when thy life is almost at an end ? What a stupid forgetfulness is it of our mortality, to put off good resolutions to the fiftieth or sixtieth year of our age, and to resolve to begin to do better at that time of life to which but very few persons have reached ?* But



But perhaps thou art not altogether so unreasonable, but desirest onely to respite this work till the first heat of youth and lust be over, till the cooler and more considerate part of thy life come on; *that* perhaps thou thinkest may be the fittest and most convenient season. But still we reckon upon uncertainties, for perhaps that season may never be: however, to be sure it is much more in our power, by the assistance of God's grace which is never wanting to the sincere endeavours of men, to conquer our lusts now, and to resist the most heady and violent temptations to vice, than either to secure the future time, or to recover that which is once past and gone.

Some seem yet more reasonable, and are content to come lower, and desire onely to put it off for a very little while. But why for a little while? Why till to morrow? To morrow will be as this day, onely with this difference, that thou wilt in all probability be more unwilling and indisposed *then*.

So that there is no *future* time which any man can reasonably pitch upon. All delay in this case is dangerous, and as senseless as the expectation of the *Ideot* described by the *Poet*, who being come to  
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the river side and intending to pass over, stays till all the water in the river be gone by and hath left the channel a dry passage for him.

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*Labitur, & labetur in omne volubilis ævum.*

But the river runs, and runs, and will run, and if he should stay a thousand years will never be the nearer being dry. So that if the man must go over, and there be necessity for it, (as there is for Repentance) the onely wise resolution to be taken in this case, is to wade or swim over as well as he can, because the matter will never be amended by tarrying.

6. *Lastly*, Consider what an unspeakable happiness it is to have our minds settled in that condition, that we may without fear and amazement, nay with comfort and confidence expect death and judgment. Death is never far from any of us, and the general Judgment of the world may be nearer than we are aware of; for *of that day and hour knoweth no man*: And these are two terrible things, and nothing can free us from the terrour of them but a good conscience, and a good conscience is onely to be had either by innocence, or by  
repent-



repentance and amendment of life. Happy man! who by this means is at peace with God, and with himself; and can think of death and judgment without dread and astonishment. For *the sting of death is sin*; and the terror of the great day onely concerns those who have lived wickedly and impenitently, and would not be perswaded, neither by the mercies of God, nor by the fear of his judgments, to repent and turn to him: But if we have truly forsaken our sins, and do sincerely endeavour to live in obedience to the Laws and Commands of God, the more we think of death and judgment the greater matter of joy and comfort will these things be to us: For *blessed is that servant, whom his Lord when he comes shall find so doing*. Let us therefore as soon as possibly we can put our selves into this posture and preparation, according to that advice of our blessed Saviour, *Luke 12. 35, 36. Let your loins be girded about, and your lamps burning, and ye your selves like unto men that wait for their Lord*.

And now I hope that enough hath been said to convince men of the great unreasonableness and folly of these delays, nay I believe that most men are convinced of it by their own thoughts, and that their  
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consciences call them fools a thousand times for it: But O that I knew what to say that might prevail with men and effectually perswade them to do that which they are so abundantly convinced is so necessary!

And here I might address my self to the several ages of persons. You that are *young*, and have hitherto been in a good measure innocent, may prevent the Devil, and by an early piety give God the first possession of your souls; and by this means never be put to the trouble of so great and solemn a repentance, having never been deeply engaged in a wicked life: You may do a glorious, I had almost said a meritorious thing, in cleaving stedfastly to God and resolving to serve him, when you are so importunately courted and so hotly assaulted by the Devil and the World. However, you may not live to be old; therefore upon that consideration begin the work presently, and make use of the opportunity that is now in your hands.

You that are grown up to *ripeness of years* and are in the full vigour of your age, *you* are to be put in mind that the heat and inconsiderateness of youth is now past and gone, that reason and consideration



deration are now in their perfection and strength, that this is the very age of prudence and discretion, of wisdom and wariness: So that now is the proper time for you to be serious, and wisely to secure your future happiness.

As for those that are *old*, *they* methinks should need no body to admonish them, that it is now high time for them to begin a new life, and that the time past of their lives is too much to have spent in sin and folly. There is no trifling where men have a great work to do, and but little time to do it in. Your Sun is certainly going down and near its setting, therefore you should quicken your pace, considering that your journey is never the shorter because you have but little time to perform it in. Alas man! thou art just ready to dye and hast thou not yet begun to live? Are thy passions and lusts yet unsubdued, and have they had no other mortification than what age hath given them? 'Tis strange to see how in the very extremities of old age many men are as if they had still a thousand years to live, and make no preparation for death, though it dogs them at the heels and is just come up to them and ready to give them the fatal stroke.

There-

Therefore let us not put off this necessary work of reforming our selves, in what part and age of our lives soever we be. *To day, whilst it is called to day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.* Nay to day is with the latest to begin this work, had we been wise we would have begun it sooner. 'Tis God's infinite mercy to us that it is not quite too late, that the day of God's patience is not quite expired, and the door shut against us. Therefore do not defer your repentance to the next solemn time, to the next occasion of receiving the blessed Sacrament: Do not say I will then reform and become a new man, after *that* I will take leave of my lusts and sin no more. For let us make what haste we can we cannot possibly make too much.

----- *properat vivere nemo satis.*

No man makes haste enough to be good, *to cease to do evil, and to learn to do well.* Be as quick as we will life will be too nimble for us, and go on faster than our work does, and death will go nigh to prevent us and surprize us unawares.

Do, do *sinner*; abuse and neglect thy self yet a little while longer, till the time of  
regarding



regarding thy soul and working out thy own salvation be at an end, and all the opportunities of minding that great concernment be slipped out of thy hands, never to be recovered, never to be called back again; no, not by thy most earnest wishes and desires, by thy most fervent prayers and tears; and thou be brought into the condition of *prophane Esau*, who for once despising the Blessing lost it for ever *and found no place of repentance though he sought it carefully with tears.*

To conclude: Art thou convinced that thy eternal happiness depends upon following the advice which hath now been given thee? Why then do but behave thyself in this case, as thou and all prudent men are wont to do in matters which thou canst not but acknowledge to be of far less concernment. If a man be travelling to such a place, so soon as he finds himself out of the way he presently stops and makes towards the right way, and hath no inclination to go wrong any further: If a man be sick he will be well presently if he can, and not put it off to the future: Most men will gladly take the first opportunity that presents it self, of being rich  
or

or great, every man almost catches at the very first offers of a great place or a good purchase and secures them presently if he can, lest the opportunity be gone and another snatch these things from him. Do thou thus so much more in matters so much greater. Return from the error of thy way, be well, save thy self, as soon as possibly thou canst. When happiness presents it self to thee do not turn it off, and bid it come again to morrow. Perhaps thou mayest never be so fairly offered again, perhaps the day of salvation may not come again to morrow, nay perhaps to *thee* to morrow may never come. But if we were sure that happiness would come again, yet why should we put it off? Does any man know how to be safe and happy to day, and can he find in his heart to tarry till to morrow?

Now the God of all mercy and patience give every one of us the wisdom and grace to *know* and to *do*, *in this our day*, *the things that belong to our peace*, *before they be hid from our eyes*; for the sake of our blessed Saviour and Redeemer, *To whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost be all honour and glory now and for ever*, Amen.

I JOHN



I JOHN III. 10.

*In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the Devil : whosoever doth not righteousness is not of God.*

**I**T is certainly a matter of the greatest consequence to us, both in order to our present peace and future happiness, truly to understand our spiritual state and condition, and whether we belong to God and be his Children or not : And it is not so difficult as is commonly imagined to arrive at this knowledge, if we have a mind to it, and will but deal impartially with our selves ; For the Text gives us a plain mark and character whereby we may know it, *In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the Devil : whosoever doth not righteousness is not of God.*

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From

From which words I shall endeavour by God's assistance to lay men open to themselves, and to represent to every one of us the truth of our condition; and then leave it to the grace of God, and every man's serious consideration, to make the best use of it.

And it will conduce very much to the clearing of this matter to consider briefly the occasion of these words. And this will best appear by attending stedfastly to the main scope and design of this *Epistle*. And I think that no man that reads it with attention can doubt but that it is particularly designed against the impious Sect of the *Gnosticks* who, as the *Fathers* tell us, sprang from *Simon Magus*, and pretended to extraordinary knowledge and illumination, from whence they had the name of *Gnosticks*; but notwithstanding this glittering pretence they did allow themselves in all manner of impious and vicious practices, *turning the grace of God into lasciviousness*, as St. *Jude* speaks of them. And that St. *John* aims particularly at this sort of men is very evident from the frequent and plain allusions throughout this *Epistle* to those Names and Titles which this Sect assumed to themselves, as *Chap. 2. ver. 4. He that saith, I know him,*  
and



and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. And verse 9. *He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even untill now.* Which passages, and many more in this *Epistle*, do plainly refer to the pretences of this *Sect* to more than ordinary *knowledge* and *illumination* in the mysteries of Religion; notwithstanding they did so notoriously contradict these glorious pretences by the impiety of their lives, and particularly by their hatred and enmity to their fellow-Christians. For, as the *ancient Fathers* tell us, they pretended that whatever they did they could not sin: And this our *Apostle* intimates in the beginning of this *Epistle*, *If we say that we have no sin we deceive our selves, and the truth is not in us.* And they held it lawfull to renounce Christianity to avoid persecution; and not only so, but also to joyn with the Heathen in persecuting the Christians; which seems to be the reason why the *Apostle* so often taxeth them for hatred to their Brethren and calls them *Murderers*.

Now to shew the inconsistency of these principles and practices with Christianity the *Apostle* useth many arguments, amongst which he particularly insisteth

upon this, That nothing is more essential to a *Disciple of Christ* and a *Child of God* (by which Titles Christians were commonly known) than to abstain from the practice of all sin and wickedness ; *vers. 6. of this Chap. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not ; whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him,* (whatever knowledge they might pretend to, it was evident they were destitute of the true knowledge of God and his Son *Jesus Christ*) and *verse 7. Little Children , let no man deceive you ; he that doth righteousness is righteous , even as he is righteous ;* and *verse 8. He that committeth sin is of the Devil ;* and *verse 9. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin ;* let men pretend what they will, wickedness is a plain mark and character of one that belongs to the *Devil* ; as on the contrary, righteousness is an evidence of a *Child of God*, *In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the Devil, &c.*

I shall briefly explain the words, and then consider the matter contained in them.

*By the children of God, and the children of the Devil,* are meant good and bad men ; It being usual in the phrase of Scripture  
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to call persons or things which partake of such a nature or quality the children of those who are eminently endued with that nature and disposition. Thus they who are of the faith of *Abraham*, and do the works of *Abraham*, are called *Abraham's children*: In like manner, those who in their disposition and actions imitate God are called *the children of God*; and on the contrary, those that addict themselves to sin and impiety are counted of another race and descent, they resemble the Devil and belong to him as the Chief and Head of that Faction.

By *righteousness* is here meant universal goodness and conformity to the Law of God, in opposition to sin which is the transgression of that Law.

By being *manifest* is meant that hereby good and bad men are really distinguished, so that every one that will examine his condition by this mark may know of which number he is, and to what Party he belongs.

I come now to the main argument contained in the words, which is to give us a certain character and mark of distinction between a good and bad man; ἐν τέτρω, *by this the children of God are manifest and the*

*children of the Devil : whosoever doth not righteousness is not of God.*

In the management of the following Discourse I shall proceed in this method.

*First*, We will consider the character and mark of difference between a good and bad man which is here laid down, *Whosoever doth not righteousness, is not of God.*

*Secondly*, I shall endeavour to shew that by this mark every man may, with due care and diligence, come to the knowledge of his spiritual state and condition. *By this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the Devil.*

*Thirdly*, I shall enquire whence it comes to pass, that notwithstanding this so many persons are at so great uncertainty concerning their condition.

I. We will consider the character and mark of difference between a good and bad man which is here in the Text, *Whosoever doth not righteousness is not of God*; which implies likewise on the contrary, that *whosoever doth righteousness is of God*. Now in the strictest sense of this phrase, he only who lives in all the commandments of God blameless can be said to *do righteousness*; But in this sense *there is*  
none



none that doth righteousness, no not one ; and consequently none could be the Children of God ; but the Text supposes some to be so, and therefore by *doing righteousness* the *Apostle* must necessarily be understood to mean something that is short of perfect and unsinning obedience. So that the question is, What *doing of righteousness* is sufficient to denominate a man a *Child of God*, and to put him into a state of grace and favour with Him.

And I do not intend nicely to state this matter. 'Tis not perhaps possible to be done, nothing being more difficult than to determine the very utmost bounds and limits of things, and to tell exactly and just to a point where the line of difference between Vertue and Vice, between the state of a good and bad man, is to be placed : And if it could be done, it would be of no great use ; for I take it to be no part of my business to tell men how many faults they may have, and how little goodness, and yet be *the children of God* : but rather to acquaint them what degrees of holiness and goodness are necessary to give men a clear and comfortable evidence of their good estates towards God, and then to perswade them in order to their peace & assurance to endeavour after such degrees.

Wherefore to state the business so far as is necessary to give men a sufficient knowledge of their condition, I shall briefly consider who they are that in the Apostles sense may be said to be *doers of righteousness*, or *not doers of it*. And because the *Apostle* lays down the Rule negatively, I shall therefore

In the *first* place, enquire who they are that in the *Apostles* sense may be said *not to do righteousness*.

1. They that live in the general course of a wicked life, in the practice of great and known sins, as injustice, intemperance, filthy and sensual lusts, profane neglect and contempt of God and Religion, so that by the whole course and tenour of their actions it is plain beyond all denial that *there is no fear of God before their eyes*. Concerning these the case is so very evident that it seems too mild and gentle an expression to call them *not doers of righteousness*.

2. They who live in the habitual practice of any one known sin, or in the neglect of any considerable part of their known duty. For any vicious habit denominates a man, and puts him into an evil state.

3. They



3. They who are guilty of the single act of a very heinous and notorious crime; as a deliberate act of blasphemy, of murder, perjury, fraud or oppression, or of any other crime of the like enormity. For though ordinarily one single act of sin doth not denominate one a bad man, when the general course of the man's life is contrary; yet the single acts of some sorts of sins are so crying and heinous, and do so stare every man's conscience in the face, that they are justly esteemed to be of equal malignity with vicious habits of an inferiour kind; because they do almost necessarily suppose a great depravation of mind, and a monstrous alienation from God and goodness in the person that deliberately commits them. And they who are guilty in any of these three degrees now mentioned are most certainly *not doers of righteousness*, and consequently it is *manifest* that they are not *the children of God*.

In the *second* place, I shall enquire who they are that in the *Apostles* sense may be said to *do righteousness*. In short, they who in the general course of their lives do keep the Commandments of God. And thus the *Scripture* generally expresseth this matter, by *keeping the Commandments of God*, and by *having respect to all his Commandments*,

*mandments, by obedience to the Gospel of Christ, by being holy in all manner of conversation; by abstaining from all kind of evil, by cleansing our selves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and by practising holiness in the fear of God: To which I shall add the description which St. Luke gives us of the righteousness of Zacharias and Elizabeth, Luke 1. 6. They were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. All which expressions do plainly signify the actual conformity of our lives and actions, in the general course and tenour of them, to the Laws and Commands of God. And this implies these two things; That the tenour of our lives and actions be agreeable to these Laws of God: And that these actions be done with a sincere and upright mind, out of regard to God and another World, and not for low and temporal ends.*

And I chuse rather to describe a righteous man by the actual conformity of the general course of his actions to the Law of God, than (as some have done) by a sincere desire or resolution of obedience. For a desire may be sincere for the time it lasts, and yet vanish before it come to any real effect. And how innocently soever  
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it was intended it is certainly a great mistake in Divinity, and of very dangerous consequence to the souls of men, to affirm that a desire of grace is grace; and consequently by the same reason, that a desire of obedience is obedience. A sincere desire and resolution to be good is indeed a good beginning, and ought by all means to be cherished and encouraged; but yet it is far enough from being the thing desired, or from being accepted for it in the esteem of God: For God never accepts the desire for the deed, but where there is no possibility, no opportunity of doing the thing desired; but if there be, and the thing be not done, there is no reason to imagine that the desire in that case should be accepted as if the thing were done. For instance, If a man give alms according to his ability, and would give more if he were able, in this case the desire is accepted for the deed. And of this case it is and no other that the *Apostle* speaks, 2 *Cor.* 8. 12. *If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.* That is, God interprets and accepts the charity of men according to the largeness of their hearts, and not according to the straitness of their fortunes: But it is a great mistake  
to

to draw a general conclusion from this Text, that in all cases God accepts the will for the deed. For though a man sincerely desire and resolve to reform his life (as I doubt not many men often do) but do it not when there is time and opportunity for it, these desires and resolutions are of no account with God; all this *righteousness is but as the morning cloud, and as the early dew which passeth away*. Men are not apt to mistake so grossly in other matters. No man believes hunger to be meat, or thirst to be drink; and yet there is no doubt of the truth and sincerity of these natural desires. No man thinks that covetousness or a greedy desire to be rich is an estate, or that ambition or an insatiable desire of honour is really advancement: Just so, and no otherwise, a desire to be good is righteousness. The *Apostle's* caution a little before the Text may fitly be applied to this purpose, *Little children, let no man deceive you: He that doth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous*. Not but that the best of men do sometimes fall through infirmity, and are betrayed by surprise, and born down by the violence of temptation; but if the general course of our actions be a *doing of righteousness*, the grace of the Gospel, in  
and



and through the merits of our blessed Saviour, doth accept of this imperfect but sincere obedience.

II. I shall endeavour to shew that by this mark every man may, with due care and diligence, arrive at the certain knowledge of his spiritual state and condition. *By this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the Devil: Whosoever doth not righteousness is not of God.* By which the *Apostle* means that this is a real mark of difference betwixt good and bad men, and that whereby they very often manifest themselves to others; especially when the course of their lives is eminently pious and vertuous, or notoriously impious and wicked. But because it doth not so much concern us curiously to enquire into, much less severely to censure the state of other men, I shall onely consider at present how far by this mark and character every man may make a certain judgment of his own good or bad condition.

I. By this character, as I have explained it, he that is a bad man may certainly know himself to be so, if he will but consider his condition, and do not wilfully deceive and delude himself. As for those  
who

who are vicious in the general course of their lives, or have been guilty of the act of some heinous or notorious sin not yet repented of; their case is so plain for the most part, even to themselves, that they can have no manner of doubt concerning it. Such men stand continually convicted and condemned by the sentence of their own minds: and whenever they reflect upon themselves (which they do as seldom as they can) they are a *terroure to themselves*, and full of amazement and fearfull expectation of judgment. Not but that even in so plain a case many men do use great endeavours to cheat themselves, and would be very glad to find out ways to reconcile a wicked life with the hopes of heaven, and to gain the favour, at least the forgiveness of God, without repentance and amendment of their lives. And to this end they are willing to confess their sins, and to undergo any Pennance that shall be imposed upon them, that only excepted which only can do them good, I mean, real reformation. And when the Priest hath absolv'd them, they would fain believe that God hath forgiven them too; however, they return to their former course, and being strongly addicted to their lusts, between stupidity and



and foolish hopes they at last come to this desperate resolution to venture all upon the absolution of the Priest, *Et valeat quantum valere potest*, let it have what effect it can; though I dare say that in their most serious thoughts they are horribly afraid it will do them no good.

And for those who are sinners of a lesser rate, and perhaps allow themselves onely in one kind of vice, they likewise have reason to conclude themselves in a bad condition; especially if they consider that he who lives in the breach of any one Commandment of God is guilty of all, because he contemns that authority which enacted the whole Law. And 'tis easie for any man to discern the habit of any sin in himself; as when he frequently commits it, when he takes up no firm resolutions against it, when he useth no competent care to avoid the temptations to it, nor puts forth any vigorous endeavours to break off from it; or however, still continues in the practice of it. For the customary practice of any known sin is utterly inconsistent with sincere resolutions and endeavours against it, there being no greater evidence of the insincerity of resolutions and endeavours in any kind than still to go on to do contrary to them.

2. By

2. By this character likewise they that are sincerely good may generally be well assured of their good condition, and that they are *the children of God*. And there are but two things necessary to evidence this to them; That the general course and tenour of their actions be agreeable to the Laws of God; and, That they be sincere and upright in those actions. And both these every man may sufficiently know concerning himself; for if the Laws of God be plain, and lye open to every mans understanding, then is it as easie for every man to know when he obeys God and keeps his Commandments, as when he obeys the commands of his Father or his Prince, and when he keeps the known Laws of the Land. And no sensible and considerate man ever had any doubt of this kind, for if a man can know any thing he can certainly tell when he keeps or breaks a known Law; so that all doubts of this nature are frivolous and idle pretences to cover mens faults, and such as they would be ashamed to alledge in any other case.

And a good man may likewise know when he obeys God sincerely. Not but that men often deceive themselves with an opinion, or at least a groundless hope of  
their



their own sincerity ; but if they will deal fairly with themselves, and use due care and diligence, there are very few cases ( if any ) wherein they may not know their own sincerity in any act of obedience to God : For what can a man know concerning himself if not the reality of his own intentions? If any man should in earnest tell me, that he doubted very much whether he had that friendship for me which he made profession of, and that he was afraid that his affection to me was not real and sincere, I confess I should doubt of it too ; because I should certainly conclude that no man could know that matter so well as he himself.

And there is no doubt but whoever hath a hearty kindness for another, and a sincere desire to serve and please him, knows he has it. And accordingly good and holy men in Scripture do every where with great confidence and assurance appeal to God concerning the integrity and sincerity of their hearts towards him. *Job* and *David*, *Hezekiah* and *Nehemiah* in the *Old Testament* ; and in the *New* *St. Paul* for himself and *Timothy*, make this solemn profession of their sincerity, 2 *Cor.* 1. 12. *Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity*

*ty we have our conversation in the world.* And I cannot call to mind so much as any one passage in Scripture, from whence it can be collected that any good man ever doubted of his own sincerity? And to say the truth, it would not be modesty but impudence in any man to declare that he suspects himself of hypocrisie; good men have always abhorred the thoughts of it. *Ye have heard of the patience of Job,* and yet he could not bear to have his integrity questioned. It was a brave and a generous speech of his, *Till I dye, I will not remove my integrity from me.*

And yet it hath so happened that *this* is become a very common doubt among religious people, and they have been so unreasonably cherished in it as to have it made a considerable evidence of a mans sincerity to doubt of it himself. It is indeed said in Scripture, *Jer. 17. 9. That the heart is deceitfull above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it?* which is true concerning our future intentions and action; no man knowing how his mind may change hereafter. Little did *Hazael* think that ever he should do those things which the Prophet foretold him. But though this be true in it self, yet 'tis  
not



not the meaning of that Text. For the Prophet in that *chapter* plainly makes use of this consideration of the falshood and deceitfulness of mans heart as an argument to take off the people of *Israel* from *trusting in the arm of flesh*, and in those promises which were made to them of foreign assistance from *Egypt*: Because men may pretend fair and yet deceive those that rely upon them, for *the heart of man is deceitfull and desperately wicked*, and none but God knows whether mens inward intentions be answerable to their outward professions; for *he searcheth the heart and trieth the reins*. And this I verily believe is all that the *Prophet* here intends, That there is a great deal of fraud and deceit in the hearts of bad men, so that no man can rely upon their promises and professions; but God knows the hearts of all men. But now because God alone knows the hearts of all men and the sincerity of their intentions towards one another, doth it from hence follow that it is a thing either impossible or very difficult for any man to know the sincerity of his own present intentions and actions? To make any such conclusion were to *condemn the generation of God's children*, those holy and excellent men in Scripture, *Job*, and

*David*, and *Hezekiah*, and *St. Paul*, who do so frequently appeal to God concerning their own integrity. And surely when the *Apostle* saith, *No man knows the things of a man, but the spirit of a man which is in him*, he plainly supposes that every man is conscious to the motions and intentions of his own mind. I have insisted the longer upon this that I might from the very foundation destroy an imagination, which is not onely untrue in it self, but has likewise been a very great hindrance to the peace and comfort of many good men.

III. Let us enquire whence it comes to pass that notwithstanding this so many persons are at so great uncertainty about their spiritual condition. For the clearing of this matter we will distinctly consider these three things. *First*, The grounds of the false hopes and confidence of men really bad concerning their good condition. *Secondly*, The causeless doubts and jealousies of men really good concerning their bad condition. And *thirdly*, The just causes of doubting in others. As for the troubles and fears of men who are notoriously bad and live in the Practice of known vices, these do not fall under our consideration :



tion: If they be troubled about their condition, it is no more than what they ought to be; and if they be onely doubtfull of it, it is less than they ought to be. To persons in this condition there is onely counsel to be given to leave their sins and become better, but no comfort to be administered to them till first they have followed that counsel: For till they reform, if they think themselves to be in a bad condition, they think just as they ought and as there is great reason, and no body should go about to perswade them otherwise.

*First* then, we will consider the grounds of the false hopes and confidence of men really bad concerning their good condition. I do not now mean the worst of men, but such as make some shew and appearance of goodness. It is very unpleasing to men to fall under the hard opinion and censure of others, but the most grievous thing in the world for a man to be condemned by himself; and therefore it is no wonder that men use all manner of shifts to avoid so great an inconvenience as is the ill opinion of a mans self concerning himself and his own condition.

Some therefore rely upon the profession of the Christian Faith, and their being

baptized into it. But this is so far from being any exemption from a good life, that it is the greatest and most solemn obligation to it. Dost thou believe the Doctrine of the Gospel? thou of all men art inexcusable if thou allowest thy self in ungodliness and worldly lusts.

Others trust to their external Devotion, they frequent the Church and serve God constantly, they pray to him, and hear his word, and receive the blessed Sacrament: But let us not deceive our selves, God is not mocked. All this is so far from making amends for the impiety of our lives, that on the contrary the impiety of our lives spoils all the acceptance of our devotions. *He that turneth away his ear from hearing the Law (that is, from obeying it) even his prayer shall be an abomination.*

Others who are sensible they are very bad depend very much upon their repentance, especially if they set solemn times apart for it. And there is no doubt but that a sincere repentance will put a man into a good condition: But then it is to be considered that no repentance is sincere but that which produceth a real change and reformation in our lives. For we have not repented to purpose if we return again to  
our



our sins. It is well thou art in some measure sensible of thy miscarriage, but thou art never safe till thou hast forsaken thy sins; thy estate and condition towards God is not chang'd, till thou hast really alter'd thy self and the course of thy life.

Others satisfy themselves with the exercise of some particular graces and virtues, Justice, and Liberality, and Charity. And is it not a thousand pities that thy life is not all of a piece, and that all the other parts of it are not answerable to these, that thou shouldst lose the reward of so much real goodness out of thy fondness to any one vice or lust, that when *thou art not far from the Kingdom of God* for lack of one or two things more thou shouldst fall short of it? Hast thou never heard what the Scripture saith, that *he who offends in one point is a transgressor of the whole Law*? To make a man a good man all parts of goodness must concur, but any one way of wickedness is sufficient to denominate a man bad.

*Lastly*, Some who are very careful of their outward carriage and conversation, but yet are conscious to themselves of great secret faults and vices, when they can find no comfort from themselves and the testimony of their own consciences, are apt to comfort themselves in

the good opinion which perhaps others have of them. But if we know our selves to be bad and *our own hearts to condemn us*, it is not the good opinion of others concerning us which can either alter or better our condition. They may have reason for their charity, and yet thou none for thy confidence. Trust no body concerning thy self rather than thy self, because no body can know thee so well as thou mayest know thy self.

These, and such as these, are the hopes of the Hypocrite, which *Job* elegantly compares to *the Spiders web*, finely and artificially wrought but miserably thin and weak; so that we our selves may see through them, and if we lay the least stress upon them they will break. They are but pleasant dreams and delusions, which whenever we are awaken'd to a serious consideration of our condition by the apprehensions of approaching death and judgment, will presently vanish and disappear; so the same *holy man* tells us, *Job* 27. 8. *What is the hope of the Hypocrite, when God taketh away his Soul?*

Secondly, We will consider in the next place the causless doubts and jealousies of men really good, concerning their bad condition. For as some are prone beyond  
all



all reason to delude themselves with vain hopes of their good condition, so others are apt as unreasonably to torment themselves with groundless fears and jealousies that their estate is bad. And of these doubts there are several occasions, the chief whereof I shall mention by which we may judge of the rest that are of the like nature.

1. Some are afraid that they are reprobated from all eternity, and therefore they cannot be the *Children of God*. This is so unreasonable, that if it were not a real cause of trouble to some persons it did not deserve to be considered. For no man that sincerely endeavours to please God and to keep his Commandments hath from Scripture the least ground to suspect any latent or secret decree of God against him that shall work his ruine. But whatever the decrees of God be concerning the eternal state of men, since they are secret to us they can certainly be no rule either of our duty or comfort. And no man hath reason to think himself rejected of God, either from eternity, or in time, that does not find the marks of Reprobation in himself, I mean an evil heart and life. By this indeed a man may know that he is out of God's favour for the present, but he hath

hath no reason at all from hence to conclude that God hath from all eternity and for ever cast him off. That God calls him to repentance, and affords to him the space and means of it, is a much plainer sign that God is willing and ready to have mercy on him than any thing else is, or can be, that God hath utterly cast him off. And therefore for men to judge of their condition by the decrees of God which are hid from us, and not by his word which is *near us and in our hearts*, is as if a man wandring in the wide Sea, in a dark night when the heaven is all clouded about, should yet resolve to steer his course by the stars which he cannot see, but onely guess at, and neglect the Compass, which is at hand and would afford him a much better and more certain direction. This therefore is to be rejected as a fond and groundless imagination, and which ought to trouble no body, because no body doth nor can know any thing concerning it. *Moses* hath long since very well determin'd this matter, *Deut. 29. 29. Secret things belong unto the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed, unto us and our Children for ever, that we may do all the words of this Law.*



2. Good men are conscious to themselves of many frailties and imperfections, and therefore they are afraid of their condition. But God considers the infirmities of our present state, and expects no other obedience from us in order to our acceptance with him, but what this state of imperfection is capable of: And provided the sincere endeavour and general course of our lives be to please him and keep his Commandments, the terms of the Gospel are so mercifull, that our frailties shall not be imputed to us, so as to affect our main state and to make us cease to be the Children of God. And though we may be guilty of many errours and secret sins which escape our notice and observation, yet it is not impossible for us to exercise such a repentance for these as will be available for their pardon. For we have to deal with a merciful God, who is pleased to accept of such an obedience and of such a repentance as we are capable of performing. Now there is a great difference between those sins which require a particular repentance before we can hope for the pardon of them, (as all great and deliberate and presumptuous sins do, which are never committed without our knowledge, and are so far from  
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slipping out of our memory that they are continually flying in our faces, and we cannot forget them if we would ) and sins of infirmity occasion'd by surprise and violence of temptation, through ignorance or inadvertency: For a general repentance, such as we every day exercise in our devotions and prayers to God, may suffice for these. I speak not this to hinder any from a more particular repentance of all their known failings, the more particular the better; but to remove the groundless fears and jealousies of men about their main estate and condition. And if any ask how I know that a general repentance will suffice for these kind of sins; I answer, because more than this in many cases is impossible; so that either we must rest satisfied that God will forgive them upon these terms, or conclude that they shall not be forgiven at all, which is contrary to the whole tenour of the Scriptures: I say, in many cases, more than this is impossible, because sins of ignorance, and those common errors and frailties of humane life which *David* calls *secret sins*, are not particularly known to us when they are committed, and consequently it is impossible that we should particularly repent of them. And therefore in this case  
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there can be no doubt but that God doth accept of a general repentance, as he did from *David* when he made that humble confession and prayer to him, *Psal. 19.12. Who can understand his errours? cleanse thou me from secret sins.*

3. They are afraid their obedience is not sincere, because it proceeds many times from fear and not always out of pure love to God. For answer to this: It is plain from Scripture that God propounds to men several motives and arguments to obedience, some proper to work upon their *fear*, as the threatnings of punishment; some upon their *hope*, as the promises of blessing and reward; others upon their *love*, as the mercies and forgiveness of God. From whence it is evident he intended they should all work upon us. And accordingly the Scripture gives us instances in each kind. *Noah moved with fear* obeyed God in *preparing an Ark*. *Moses had respect unto the recompence of Reward*: *Mary Magdalen loved much*. And as it is hard to say, so it is not necessary to determine just how much influence and no more each of these hath upon us: It is very well if men be reclaimed from their sins and made good by the joynt force of all the considerations which God offers to us. To be

be sure Love is the noblest and most generous principle of obedience, but fear commonly takes the first and fastest hold of us, and in times of violent temptation is perhaps the best argument to keep, even the best of men, within the bounds of their duty.

4. Another cause of doubting in good men is, from a sense of their imperfect performance of the duties of Religion, and of the abatement of their affections towards God at some times. They have many wandring thoughts in prayer and other exercises of devotion, and they cannot for their life keep their minds continually intent on what they are about. This we should strive against as much as we can, and that is the utmost we can do; but to cure this wholly is impossible, the infirmity of our nature and the frame of our minds will not admit of it: And therefore no man ought to question his sincerity, because he cannot do that which is impossible for men to do.

And then for the abatement of our affections to God and Religion at some times, this naturally proceeds from the inconstancy of mens tempers, by reason of which it is not possible that the best of men should be able always to maintain  
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and keep up the same degree of zeal and fervour towards God. But our comfort is that God doth not measure mens sincerity by the Tides of their affections, but by the constant bent of their resolutions and the general tenour of their life and actions.

5. Another cause of these doubts is, that men expect more than ordinary and reasonable assurance of their good condition; some particular revelation from God, and extraordinary impression upon their minds to that purpose, which they think the Scripture means by the *testimony* and *seal* and *earnest of the Spirit*. God may give this when and to whom he pleases, but I do not find he hath any where promised it. And all that the Scripture means by those phrases of the *testimony*, and *seal*, and *earnest of the Spirit*, is to my apprehension no more but this, That the Holy Spirit which God bestowed upon Christians in so powerfull and sensible a manner was a *seal* and *earnest* of their resurrection to eternal life, according to that plain Text, *Rom. 8. 11. If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies, by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.* But then,

then, who they are that have the Spirit of God is onely to be known by the real fruits and effects of it. If we be *led by the Spirit*, and *walk in the Spirit*, and *do not fulfill the lusts of the flesh*, then *the Spirit of God dwelleth in us*. But this is very far from an immediate and extraordinary revelation from the Spirit of God to the minds of good men telling them in particular that they are the Children of God. I know not what peculiar favour God may shew to some, but I know no such thing, nor ever yet met with any wise and good man that did affirm it of himself: And I fear that in most of those who pretend to it, it is either meer fancy or gross delusion.

6. As for the case of *melancholy* it is not a reasonable case, and therefore doth not fall under any certain rules and directions. They who are under the power of it are seldom fit to take that counsel which alone is fit to be given them, and *that* is, not to believe themselves concerning themselves, but to trust the judgment of others rather than their own apprehensions. In other cases every man knows himself best, but a melancholy man is most in the dark as to himself. This cause of trouble and doubting is very much to be pitied but  
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hard to be removed, unless by Physick, or by time, or by chance. One may happen to say something that may hit the humour of a melancholy man and satisfy him for the present, but Reason must needs signify very little to those persons the nature of whose distemper it is to turn every thing that can be said for their comfort into objections against themselves.

*Thirdly*, but besides those who mistake their condition either by presuming it to be better, or fearing it to be worse than it is, there are likewise others who upon good grounds are doubtfull of their condition, and have reason to be afraid of it: Those I mean, who have some beginnings of goodness which yet are very imperfect. They have good resolutions and do many things well, but they often fall and are frequently pull'd back by those evil inclinations and habits which are yet in a great measure unsubdued in them. These I cannot liken better than to the *Borderers* between two Countries who live in the marches and confines of two powerfull Kingdoms, both which have a great influence upon them, so that it is hard to say whose subjects they are and to which Prince they belong: Thus it is with many

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in Religion, they have pious inclinations and have made some fair attempts towards goodness, they have begun to refrain from sin and to resist the occasions and temptations to it; but ever and anon they are mastered by their old lusts, and carried off from their best resolutions; and perhaps upon a little consideration they repent and recover themselves again, and after a while are again entangled and overcome.

Now the case of these persons is really doubtfull both to themselves and others. And the proper direction to be given them in order to their peace and settlement, is by all means to encourage them to go on and fortifie their good resolutions; to be more vigilant and watchfull over themselves, to strive against sin and to resist it with all their might. And according to the success of their endeavours in this conflict the evidence of their good condition will every day clear up and become more manifest; the more we grow in grace, and the seldomer we fall into sin, and the more even and constant our obedience to God is, so much the greater and fuller satisfaction we shall have of our good estate towards God: *For the path of the just is as the shining light, which shines more and more unto the perfect day: And the work of righteousness*



*teousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.*

I shall onely make two or three Inferences from what hath been discoursed upon this Argument, and so conclude.

1. From hence we learn the great danger of sins of Omission as well as Commission; *Whosoever doth not righteousness is not of God.* The meer neglect of any of the great duties of Religion, of piety towards God and of kindness and charity to men, though we be free from the commission of great sins, is enough to cast us out of the favour of God and to shut us for ever out of his Kingdom, *I was hungry, and ye gave me no meat; thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; sick and in prison, and ye visited me not; therefore depart ye cursed.*

2. It is evident from what hath been said, That nothing can be vainer than for men to live in any course of sin and impiety and yet to pretend to be the Children of God, and to hope for eternal life. The Children of God will do the works of God, and whoever hopes to enjoy him hereafter will endeavour to be like him here; *Every man that hath his hope in Him, purifies himself even as He is pure.*

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3. You see what is the great mark and character of a mans good or bad condition; *whosoever doth righteousness is of God, and whosoever doth not righteousness, is not of God.* Here is a plain and sensible evidence by which every man that will deal honestly with himself may certainly know his own condition; and then according as he finds it to be, may take comfort in it, or make haste out of it. And we need not ascend into heaven, nor go down into the deep, to search out the secret counsels and decrees of God; there needs no anxious enquiry whether we be of the number of God's Elect: If we daily mortifie our lusts and grow in goodness, and take care to add to our Faith and Knowledge, temperance and patience and charity, and all other Christian graces and vertues, we certainly take the best course in the world to *make our calling and election sure.* And without this it is impossible that we should have any comfortable and well-grounded assurance of our good condition. This one mark of *doing righteousness* is that into which all other signs and characters, which are in Scripture given of a good man, are finally resolved; And this answers all those various phrases which some men would make to be so many



many several and distinct marks of a *Child of God*; as whether we have the true knowledge of God and divine illumination, for *hereby we know that we know him if we keep his Commandments*: whether we sincerely love God, for *this is the love of God that we keep his Commandments*: and whether God loves us, for *the righteous Lord loveth righteousness and his countenance will behold the upright*: whether we be regenerate and born of God, for *whosoever is born of God sinneth not*: whether we have the *Spirit of God* witnessing with our spirits that we are the *Children of God*, for as many as have the *Spirit of God* are led by the Spirit, and by the Spirit do mortifie the deeds of the flesh: whether we belong to Christ, and have an interest in him or not, for *they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts thereof*: In a word, whether the promise of heaven and eternal life belong to us, for *without holiness no man shall see the Lord*, but if we have our fruits unto holiness, the end will be everlasting life. So that you see at last, the Scripture brings all to this one mark, holiness and obedience to the Laws of God, or a vicious and wicked life; *In this the Children of God are manifest, and the Children of the*  
O 3 Devil;

*Devil ; whosoever doth not righteousness is not of God.*

Let us then deal impartially with our selves, and bring our lives and actions to this trial and never be at rest till the matter be brought to some issue, and we have made a deliberate judgment of our condition, whether we be *the Children of God* or not : And if upon a full and fair examination our consciences give us this testimony, that by the Grace of God we have *denied ungodliness and worldly lusts*, and have *lived soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present world*, we may take joy and comfort in it ; for *if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God* : But if upon the search and trial of our ways our case appear clearly to be otherwise, or if we have just cause to doubt of it, let us not venture to continue one moment longer in so uncertain and dangerous a condition. And if we desire to know the way of Peace the Scripture hath set it plainly before us, *Wash ye, make ye clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes, cease to do evil, learn to do well : Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord, though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow : Let the wicked forsake his way,*



way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. Though our case be very bad, yet it is not desperate; *This is a faithfull saying, and worthy of all men to be embraced, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.* And he is still willing to save us, if we be but willing to leave our sins and to serve him in holiness and righteousness the remaining part of our lives. We may yet be *turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.* We who have ventured so long upon the brink of ruine may yet by the infinite mercies of God and by the power of his Grace be rescu'd from the base and miserable slavery of the Devil and our lusts *into the glorious liberty of the Sons of God.*

And thus I have endeavoured, with all the plainness I could, to represent every man to himself, and to let him clearly see what his condition is towards God, and how the case of his soul and of his eternal happiness stands. And I do verily believe that what I have said in this matter is the truth of God, to which we ought all gladly to yield and render up our selves. For *great is Truth, and mighty above all things:*

She is faithfull and impartial in her counsels, and though she be not allways welcome yet 'tis always wise to hearken to her, for in great kindness and charity she lets men know their condition and the danger of it that they may take care to prevent it: *With her is no accepting of persons, and in her judgment there is no unrighteousness.* I will conclude all with that

*Antonin.  
lib. 10.*

excellent advice of a Heathen Philosopher, *Make it no longer a matter of dispute what are the marks and signs of a good man, but immediately set about it and endeavour to become such an one.*

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LUKE



## LUKE XV. 7.

*I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance.*

**A**FTER many attempts made in vain to reclaim Sinners from their evil ways and to bring them to the wisdom of the just, it is hard for us who are the Messengers of God to men not to sit down in despondence, and at last quite to despair of doing good upon them. But when I consider the infinite patience of God with Sinners and how long *his Spirit strives with them*, why should we, we who are Sinners our selves, think much to bear with Sinners and patiently to contend with their obstinacy and perverseness? When I consider that our blessed *Saviour*, the great Preacher and Pattern of Righteousness,

ousness, did not give over the worst of men nor despair of their recovery : this methinks should make us who are *Ambassadors for Christ*, unwearied in *beseeking men in his stead to be reconciled to God*.

And of this we have a famous instance in this *Chapter* : The *Publicans* and *Sinners*, as they had done several times before, came to hear our Saviour : He treated them very kindly, and conversed familiarly with them ; at this the *Pharisees* were displeased and murmured, and this unreasonable murmuring of theirs gave occasion to the three *Parables* in this *Chapter*.

In which our Saviour does at once answer the Objection of the *Pharisees*, and give all possible encouragement to the repentance of these great Sinners. He answers the *Pharisees* by letting them plainly see that he was about the best work in the world, the most acceptable to God, and matter of greatest joy to all the heavenly Inhabitants. Instead of a severe Reproof of their uncharitableness he offers that calmly to their consideration, which ought in all reason to convince them that he was no ways to blame for this familiar conversation of his with Sinners, having no other design upon them but to reclaim them



them from their Vices, and to make them fit company for the best of men; that he was a Spiritual Physician, and therefore his proper work and employment lay among his Patients. And then instead of terrifying these Sinners, who seemed to come with a good mind to be instructed by him, he gently insinuates the most winning arguments and the greatest encouragement to Repentance; by shewing how ready God was after all their sins and provocations to receive them to his grace and favour, provided they did sincerely repent and betake themselves to a better course: And not onely so, but that the repentance of a sinner is a great joy to the great King of the World, and to all that holy and heavenly Host that attend upon Him.

From which method of our Saviour in treating so great Sinners so gently, I cannot but make this observation, for my own use as well as for others; That it is good to give, even the greatest of Sinners, all the encouragement we can to repentance; and though men have been never so bad, yet if they have but this one good quality left in them that they are patient to be instructed, and content to hear good counsel, we should use them kindly and endea-

endeavour to recover them by the fairest means; not so much upbraiding them for their having been bad, as encouraging them to become better.

To this purpose our Saviour uttered *three* Parables; of *the recovery of a lost sheep*; of *finding a lost piece of money*; of *the return of a prodigal son to his father*; and though they all aim at the same scope and design, yet our Saviour useth this variety, not onely to convey the same thing to several capacities in a more acceptable manner, one similitude happening to hit one person and another another, but likewise to inculcate so weighty a matter the more upon his hearers and to fix it more deeply in their minds.

The words which I have read are the Moral or application of the first *Parable*, concerning a man who had an hundred sheep, and having lost one leaves the ninety and nine to go to seek that which was lost; and having found it, with great joy brings it home. By which our Saviour gives us to understand, what joy God and the blessed Spirits above take in the conversion of a sinner. *I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in Heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance.*



tance. Than which nothing could have been more proper, both to silence the uncharitable murmuring of the Pharisees against our Saviour for conversing with Publicans and Sinners to so good an end, and likewise to encourage sinners to repent: For why should the Pharisees be displeased at that which was so great a pleasure to God and the holy Angels; and what greater encouragement to repentance than this, that God is not onely willing to receive the returning sinner, but that the news of his repentance is entertained in Heaven with so much joy, that if it be possible for the blessed Inhabitants of that place to have any thing added to their happiness, this will be a new accession to it?

There are *three* things in the words which require a very carefull explication.

1. How we are to understand the *joy* that is *in Heaven* at the conversion of a sinner?

2. Who are here meant by the *just persons that need no repentance*?

3. With what reason it is here said, that there is *more joy in Heaven over one sinner that repenteth, than over ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance*?

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There is something of difficulty in each of these, which deserves our heedfull and attentive consideration.

I. How we are to understand the *joy that is in Heaven at the repentance of a sinner*? And this (as indeed this whole passage of our Saviours) we are not to understand too strictly and rigorously, but as spoken in a great measure after the manner of men and by way of accommodation to our capacity, so far as the persons here spoken of are capable of any addition to their joy and happiness.

As it refers *to God*, it seems very inconsistent with the happiness and perfection of the Divine Nature to suppose Him really capable of joy, any more than of grief or any other passion. Because this would be to imagine some new accession to his pleasure and happiness, which being always infinite can never have any thing added to it. And therefore we are to understand this, as it relates to God, in the same manner as we do infinite other passages of Scripture where humane passions are ascribed to him, to be spoken by way of condescension and after the language and manner of the sons of men; and to signifie onely thus much to us, that  
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the conversion of a sinner is a thing highly pleasing and acceptable to God.

As it refers to *Angels* and other *blessed Spirits*, I see no inconvenience why it may not be understood more strictly and literally ; that they conceive a new joy at the news of a sinners repentance, and find a fresh pleasure and delight springing up in their minds whenever they hear the joyfull tydings of a sinner rescued from the slavery of the Devil and the danger of eternal damnation ; of a new member added to the Kingdom of God, that shall be a companion and sharer with them in that blessedness which they enjoy. There seems to me to be nothing in this repugnant to the nature and happiness of blessed Spirits in another world. For it is certain, that there are degrees of happiness among the blessed : From whence it necessarily follows, that some of them may be happier than they are. And it is very probable, since the happiness of Angels and good men is but finite, that those who are most happy do continually receive new additions to their blessedness ; and that their felicity is never at a stand but perpetually growing and improving to all eternity ; and that as their knowledge and love do encrease, so likewise the capacity and causes

ses of their happiness are still more and more enlarged and augmented: So that it is reasonable enough to suppose that there is really joy, among the Angels and Spirits of just men made perfect, over every sinner that repenteth.

II. Who are here meant by the *just persons who need no repentance*? That our Saviour in this expression gives some glance and reflection upon the *Pharisees* ( who prided themselves in their own righteousness, and instead of confessing their sins to God stood upon their own justification, as if they needed no repentance ) is very probable; because this *Parable* was designed to answer their murmurings against him, for conversing with publicans and sinners, and by the by to give a check to those who were so conceited of their own righteousness as if they had no need of repentance. And this is very suitable to what our Saviour elsewhere says to them upon the like occasion, that *the whole have no need of the Physician, but the sick*; that *he came not to call the righteous, but the sinners to repentance*. But yet though our Saviour expresseth himself so as that the Pharisees might with reason enough apply it to themselves, that there was more joy  
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in Heaven over one sinner that repenteth than over ninety and nine of *them*, who were so conceited of their own righteousness that they thought they had no need of repentance (for indeed our Saviour delivers himself so, as to leave room for such a severe application) yet I think there is little doubt to be made but that he intended something further; and that supposing the Pharisees were as just as they pretended, and were really righteous men so as to stand in no need of such a repentance as great sinners do, yet our Saviour affirms, *there was more joy in Heaven over one penitent sinner, than over ninety and nine such just persons.*

But are there any persons in the world so just, as absolutely to stand in need of no repentance? No, there was never any such person in the world, him onely excepted who said this, our blessed Saviour, *who had no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.* And therefore this phrase of *needing no repentance* is to be understood in a qualified sense, and with some allowance; otherwise our blessed Saviour had supposed a case which never was, of a great number of perfectly righteous men. And our Saviour's meaning in this is sufficiently explained in the last Parable of

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this Chapter, concerning the *Prodigal Son*; Where the prodigal son is the *sinner that repented*; and his elder brother, who had always observed and obeyed his father, he is the *just person who needed no repentance*. So that by him our Saviour plainly designs those who being religiously educated and brought up in the fear of God had never broke out into any extravagant and vicious course of life, and so in some sense had no need of repentance, that is, of changing the whole course of their lives, as the prodigal son had. Not but that the best of men are guilty of many faults and infirmities which they have too much cause to repent of, as our Saviour sufficiently intimates in that *Parable*: For certainly it was no small infirmity in the elder brother to be so envious, and to take so heinously the joyfull welcome and entertainment which his prodigal brother at his return found from his father: But yet this single fault and sudden surprize of passion, considering the constant duty which he had paid to his father throughout the course of his life, did not make him such a sinner as to need such a repentance as his brother did, which consisted in a perfect change of the whole course of his life. And of such *just persons* as these, and of such



such a *repentance* as this, it seems very plain that our Saviour intended this discourse.

III. But the main difficulty of all is, with what reason it is here said that *there is more joy in Heaven over one sinner that repenteth, than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance*? Is it not better not to offend, than to sin and repent? Is not innocence better than amendment, and the wisdom of prevention to be preferred before that of remedy? Is it worth the while to do amiss to make way for repentance; and is not this almost like *sinning that grace may abound*? And if repentance be not better than righteousness, why is there more joy in Heaven over the penitent than over the righteous; nay over one penitent sinner, than over ninety and nine just persons? Do not the blessed always rejoyce most in that which is really best? Here is the difficulty, and it requires some care and consideration clearly to remove it. In order to which be pleased to consider these *three* things, which I think to be very material to the clearing of it.

1. That the same thing considered in several respects, may in some respects have the advantage of another thing and for those reasons be preferred before it, and yet not have the advantage of it absolutely and in all respects. Moral comparisons are not to be exacted to a Mathematical strictness and rigour. To this purpose I have observ'd in a former discourse, that it was long since judiciously noted by *Aristotle*, "That moral and  
 " proverbial speeches are not to be taken  
 " too strictly, as if they were universally  
 " true, and in all cases: It is sufficient if they be true for the most part, and in several respects which are very considerable. And of this nature are most of the *Proverbs of Solomon*, and whosoever shall go about to make out the truth of them in all cases does in my opinion take a very hard task upon himself. But which is nearer to my purpose, our Saviour himself in the Chapter before my Text, and in the moral application of a Parable too, (namely that of the *unjust Steward*) useth a proverbial speech just in the same manner; *The Children of this world are in their generation wiser than the Children of light*: Which is onely a wise observation that is generally true and in many respects, but  
 not



not absolutely and universally. For some men have been as wise and diligent for the glory of God and interest of their souls, as ever any man was for this world and for the advancement of his temporal interest. Of the like Nature is this saying used by our Saviour, probably taken (as our Saviour did many other proverbial speeches) from the Jews, and applied to his own purpose. For there are several sayings of the Jewish Masters much to this purpose: As, *Great is the dignity of penitents; Great is the vertue of them that repent, so that no creature may stand in their rank and order.* And again, *The righteous may not stand in the same place with those that have repented.* These I confess were very high sayings, but yet very well designed for the encouragment of repentance. And they are not without good reason, as will appear if we consider these two things.

*First,* That the greater the difficulty of vertue is, so much the greater is the praise and commendation of it: And not onely we our selves take the more joy and comfort in it, but it is more admirable and delightfull to others. Now it cannot be denied to be much more difficult to break off a vicious habit, than to go on in a good way

way which we have been trained up in, and always accustomed to. Those that have been well educated have great cause to thank God, and to acknowledge the care of their Parents and Teachers: For piety and goodness are almost infinitely easier to such persons, than to those who have wanted this advantage. It is happy for them they never tasted of unlawfull pleasures; if they had, they would possibly have drank as deep as others: It is well they were never entangled in a sinful course, nor enslaved to vicious habits, nor *hardened through the deceitfulness of sin*; if they had, they might possibly never have been recovered out of the snare of the Devil. By the happiness of a good education, and the mercifull providence of God, a great part of many mens vertue consists in their ignorance of vice, and their being kept out of the way of great and dangerous temptations; rather in the good customs they have been bred up to, than in the deliberate choice of their wills; and rather in the happy preventions of evil, than their resolute constancy in that which is good. And God who knows what is in man, and sees to the bottom of every man's temper and inclination, knows how far this would have fallen had he



he had the temptations of other men; and how irrecoverably perhaps he would have been plunged in an evil course, had he once entred upon it. So that repentance is a very great thing; and though it be the most just, and fit, and reasonable thing in the world, yet for all that it deserves great commendation, because it is for the most part so very hard and difficult. And therefore though absolutely speaking, innocence is better than repentance, yet, as the circumstances may be the virtue of some penitents may be greater than of many just and righteous persons.

Secondly, there is this consideration further to recommend repentance, that they who are reclaimed from a wicked course are many times more thoroughly and zealously good afterwards: Their trouble and remorse for their sins does quicken and spur them on in the ways of vertue and goodness, and a lively sense of their past errors is apt to make them more carefull and conscientious of their duty, more tender and fearfull of offending God and desirous if it were possible to redeem their former miscarriages by their good behaviour for the future. Their love to God is usually more vehement and burns with a brighter flame, for to whomsoever much

*is forgiven they will love much.* And they are commonly more zealous for the conversion of others, as being more sensible of the danger sinners are in and more apt to commiserate their case, remembering that it was once their own condition and with what difficulty they were rescued from so great a danger. And for the most part great penitents are more free from pride and contempt of others, the consideration of what themselves once were being enough to keep them humble all their days. So that penitents are many times more thoroughly and perfectly good, and after their recovery do in several respects outstrip and excell those who were never engaged in a vicious course of life: As a broken bone that is well set is sometimes stronger than it was before.

2. It will conduce also very much to the extenuating of this difficulty, to consider that our Saviour does not here compare repentance with absolute innocence and perfect righteousness, but with the imperfect obedience of good men who are guilty of many sins and infirmities; but yet upon account of the general course and tenour of their lives are by the mercy and favour of the Gospel esteemed just and righteous persons, and for the merits and perfect



perfect obedience of our blessed Saviour so accepted by God. Now this alters the case very much, and brings the penitent and this sort of righteous persons much nearer to one another : so that in comparing them together, the true penitent may in some cases, and in some respects, have the advantage of the righteous, and deserve upon some accounts to be preferr'd before him.

3. Which is principally to be considered for the full clearing of this difficulty ; this passage of our Saviour is to be understood as spoken very much after the manner of men, and suitably to the nature of humane passions, and the usual occasions of moving them. We are apt to be exceedingly affected with the obtaining of what we did not hope for, and much more with regaining of what we looked upon as lost and desperate. Whatever be the reason of it, such is the nature of man, that we are not so sensibly moved at the continuance of a good which we have long possess, as at the recovery of it after it was lost and gone from us. And the reasons of a judicious value and esteem, of a settled pleasure and contentment are one thing, and the causes of sudden joy and transport another. A continual course of  
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goodness may in it self be more valuable, and yet repentance after a great fall and long wandrings may be much more moving and surprizing. For where things are constant and keep in the same tenour they are not apt in their nature to give any new and sudden occasion of joy. And this is the reason given in the *Parable* of the *Prodigal Son* ; where the Father tells his eldest Son, who was so offended at the joyfull reception and welcome of his prodigal Brother, That *He had been always with him, and all that he had was his* ; That is, he was sensible of his constant duty and obedience, than which nothing could have been more acceptable ; and that it had not, nor should not lose its reward : But the return of his other Son, after he had given over all hopes of him and looked upon his case as desperate, this was a marvellous surprize and a happiness beyond expectation, which is the proper and natural cause of joy and gladness : And therefore he tells him that upon such an occasion *it was meet that we should make merry and be glad, for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again ; was lost, and is found*. His elder Sons continuance in his duty was the enjoyment of what he had always had, but the return of his prodigal Son



Son was the retrieving of what he had given up for lost, and a kind of resurrection from the dead. And thus our blessed Saviour to encourage the repentance of sinners represents God after the manner of men, as if our heavenly Father did conceive such a joy upon the repentance of a sinner as earthly parents are wont to do upon the return of a wild and extravagant Son to himself and his duty.

Having thus, as briefly and clearly as I could, explained the several difficulties in the Text, I shall now deduce some Inferences from it, and so conclude.

1. *First*, That the blessed Spirits above have some knowledge of the affairs of men here below, because they are said to rejoyce at the conversion of a sinner. This is spoken more particularly of the *Angels*, as appears by comparing what is more generally said in the Text, that *there is joy in heaven*, with what is more particularly express'd in the 10th verse, that *there is joy in the presence of the Angels* over one sinner that repenteth. Now whether the Angels come to this knowledge by vertue of their ministry here below for the good of the Elect, and so in their continual intercourse between heaven and earth bring to their fellow-servants in heaven

ven the joyfull news of the repentance of sinners upon earth: or whether God be pleased from time to time to reveal it to them, as a thing extremely welcome and delightfull to good Spirits and tending to the increase of their happiness, as it is not very material to enquire so perhaps impossible for us to determine.

However, it cannot from hence be concluded that the Angels or Saints in Heaven have such an universal knowledge of our condition and affairs, as to be a reasonable ground and warrant to us to pray to them, yea or to desire them to pray for us; no, though this were done without any solemn circumstances of Invocation. For they may very well know some things concerning us wherein their own comfort and happiness is likewise concerned, and yet be ignorant of all the rest of our affairs. This one thing we are sure they know, because our Saviour hath told us so; but we are sure of no more. And there is neither equal reason for their knowledge of our other concernments, nor is there any revelation in Scripture to that purpose.

2. *Secondly*, If God and the blessed Spirits above rejoyce at the conversion of a sinner, so should we too: and not fret and murmur as the *Pharisees* here did. This  
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is the temper of the Devil, and of very bad men, to regret and envy the good and happiness of others. For it is reasonable to believe, that proportionable to the joy that is in heaven at the repentance of a sinner is the grief and vexation of the Devil and his instruments, of evil Spirits and wicked men. And as the Devil delights in destroying souls, and goes about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour; so no doubt he is in great rage and gnasheth out of very discontent, when at any time he is frustrated of his hopes and the prey which he thought himself sure of is snatched out of his jaws. And thus we see it is with bad men, they do persecute those that forsake them and their wicked ways, and refuse to go along with them *to the same excess of Riot.*

And this is no where more visible than among those of the Church of *Rome*. How full of wrath and indignation are they against those who out of pure conviction of the errors and corruptions of their Church come over to ours? How do they persecute them with slanders and reproaches and with all the effects of hatred and malice? So that many times they can scarce refrain from doing them a real mischief, even where it is dangerous to themselves

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selves to attempt it: As if they envied them the grace of God and the opportunity of being saved.

I know it is too natural to those of all Communion, to be eager and fierce against those that desert them: And yet supposing they had the truth certainly on their side ( which they cannot all have ) I see no great reason for this temper and carriage; For why should I cast away my patience and my charity, because another man hath made shipwrack of his faith? But I do not remember any where among mankind to have observed a more implacable malice, a more sincere and hearty ill-will, than they of the Church of *Rome* do constantly express towards those that forsake them; nay, though they give never so modest and reasonable an account of their change, and behave themselves towards their old friends with all the kindness and compassion in the world: yet their hatred and indignation against them runs so high, that one may plainly see they would sooner forgive a man the greatest sins that humane nature can be guilty of, and the breach of all the ten Commandments, than this one Crime of leaving their Church, that is in truth of growing wiser and better.

3. *Thirdly,*



3. *Thirdly*, The consideration of what hath been said should mightily inflame our zeal and quicken our industry and diligence for the conversion of sinners. For if the conversion of one soul be worth so much labour and pains and matter of such joy to the blessed God and good Spirits, what pains should not we take in so corrupt and degenerate an Age as this of ours; where impenitent sinners do so much abound, and the just are almost failed from among the children of men?

Our blessed Saviour indeed (according to the extraordinary decency of all his Parables) puts the case very charitably, and lays the supposition quite on the other side: If there were but one sinner in the world, or but one of an hundred, yet we should very zealously intend, and with all our might, the reduction of this one lost sheep; and should never be at rest till this single wandering soul were found and saved. But God knows this is not our case, but quite otherwise: which should quicken our endeavours so much the more, and make us bestir our selves to the utmost, having always in our minds that admirable saying of St. James, *he that converteth a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death.* He that knows the value

value of an immortal soul, and how fearful a thing it is to perish everlastingly, can think no pains too much to take to *save a soul from death.*

4: *Lastly*, What an argument and encouragement is here to repentance, even to the greatest of sinners? They, I am sure, stand most in need of it: And though they of all others have the least reason to look for mercy, yet they shall not be refused; though they be like the *Publicans* and *Heathens* among the *Jews*, who were not onely reputed but many times really were the worst of men; though like the *prodigal Son*, here in the Parable, they have run away from their Father and *wasted their estate in lewd and riotous courses*; yet whenever *they come to themselves* and are willing to return to their Father, to acknowledge their folly and repent of it, he is ready to receive them; nay much more ready to receive them than they can be to come to him: For when the Prodigal was but coming towards his Father, and *was yet afar off, the Father runs to meet him*, and embraceth him with as much kindness as if he had never offended him, and entertains him with more joy than if he had always continued with him.

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How does the great God condescend to encourage our repentance; representing himself and all the blessed company of heaven as transported with joy at the conversion of a sinner, and almost setting a greater value upon repentance than even upon innocence it self? And if our heavenly Father, who hath been so infinitely offended and so highly provoked by us beyond all patience, be so ready, so forward, so glad to receive us, and there be no hindrance, no difficulty, no discouragement on his part; is it possible after all this that we can be such fools and such enemies to our selves, as to be backward to our own happiness! All of us, the best of us, have too much cause for repentance; and I fear too many of us stand in need of that repentance intended by our Saviour in the Text, which consists in the change of our whole lives.

But I will not upbraid you with your faults; having no design to provoke, but onely to perswade men. I leave it to every ones conscience to tell him how great a sinner, how grievous an offender he hath been. God knows we take no pleasure in mentioning the sins of men, but onely in their amendment; and we would if it were possible, even without minding them

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how bad they have been, perswade and encourage them to be better.

It is but a small consideration to tell you how much it would chear and comfort our hearts, and quicken our zeal and industry for the salvation of our souls, to see some fruit of our labours; that all our pains are not lost, and that all the good counsel that is from hence tendered to you is not like rain falling upon the rocks, and showers upon the sands.

But I have much greater considerations to offer to you; that your Repentance will at once rejoyce the heart of God, and Angels, and men: that it is a returning to a right mind, and the restoring of you to your selves, to the ease and peace of your own consciences, and to a capacity of being everlastingly happy: that it is to take pity upon your selves and your poor immortal Souls; and to take due care to prevent that which is to be dreaded above all things, the being miserable for ever: and last of all, That if you will not repent now, the time will certainly come, and that perhaps in this life, when you shall see the greatest need of repentance, and yet perhaps with miserable *Esau find no place for it, though you seek it carefully with tears*; when you shall cry, *Lord, Lord,*  
and



*and the door shall be shut against you ; and shall seek to enter, but shall not be able. To be sure in the other World you shall eternally repent to no purpose, and be continually lamenting your wretched condition without hopes of remedy ; For there shall be weeping and wailing without effect, without intermission, and without end.*

And what cause have we to thank God that this is not yet our case, that we are yet on this side the pit of destruction and the gulf of despair ? O the infinite patience and boundless goodness of God to sinners ! With what clemency hath he spared us, and *suffered our manners* thus long ? And with what kindness and concernment does he still call upon us to leave our sins and to return to him, as if in so doing we should make him happy and not our selves ? With what earnest longings and desires doth he wait and wish for our repentance, saying, *O that there were such a heart in them ! O that they would hearken unto my voice ! When shall it once be ?* Thus God is represented in *Scripture* as patiently attending and listening what effect his admonitions and counsels, his reproofs and threatnings will have upon sinners, *Jer. 8. 6. I hearkned and I heard, but they spake not aright : no man repented him of*

*his wickedness, saying, what have I done? Every one turned to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battel.*

And is not this our case? God hath long waited for our repentance; and once a year we solemnly pretend to set about it: But many of us hitherto, I fear, instead of returning to God have but more blindly and furiously run on in our course, *like the horse that hath no understanding*; yea in this more brutish than the Beast, that he rusheth into the battel without any consideration of death or danger, and destroys himself without a syllogism: But we sinners have Reason, and yet are mad; the greatest part of evil-doers are sufficiently sensible of the danger of their course, and convinced that eternal misery and ruine will be the end of it; and yet, I know not how, they make a shift upon one pretence or other to discourse and reason themselves into it.

But because *the word of God is quick and powerfull, and sharper than a two-edged sword*, and comes with a greater weight and force upon the minds of men than any humane perswasion whatsoever, I will conclude all with those short and serious counsels and exhortations of God to sinners by his holy Prophets.

*Consider*



*Consider and shew your selves men, O ye transgressors: Be instructed, O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from thee: seek the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near: Repent and turn your selves from all your transgressions, so iniquity shall not be your ruine.*

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Matth. XII. 31, 22.

*Wherefore I say unto you, all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men, but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men:*

*And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: But whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.*

**T**H E occasion of these words of our blessed Saviour was the blasphemy of the *Pharisees* against that Divine power by which he wrought his miracles, and particularly did cast out Devils. Which works of his, though they were



were wrought by the Spirit of God, yet they obstinately and maliciously imputed them to the power of the Devil. Upon which our Saviour takes occasion to declare the danger of this sin, which he calls *blaspheming of the Holy Ghost*: and tells them that this was so great a sin above all others, that it is in a peculiar manner unpardonable. *Wherefore I say unto you, &c.*

For the explaining of these words, and the nature and unpardonableness of this sin, we will enquire into these four things:

*First*, What is the difference between speaking against the Son of Man, and speaking against the Holy Ghost.

*Secondly*, Wherein the nature of this sin or blasphemy against the Holy Ghost doth consist.

*Thirdly*, In what sense this sin is here said to be peculiarly unpardonable. And

*Fourthly*, Upon what account it is so.

I. What is the difference between *speaking against the Son of Man* and *speaking against the Holy Ghost*. The reason of this enquiry is, because the Text plainly puts a great difference between them, though it be not obvious to discern where it lies. For our Saviour tells us that *whosoever speaks a word against the Son of man it shall be forgiven him, but whosoever speaketh a-*

gainst the Holy Ghost it shall never be forgiven him: And yet this blasphemy of the Pharisees against the Holy Ghost was speaking against the Son of man. For to say he cast out Devils by the power of the Devil, though it was a blaspheming of the Holy Ghost by whose power he wrought these miracles, yet it was likewise a blaspheming of Christ himself, and was in effect to say that he was no true Prophet nor did come from God, but was a Magician and impostor.

For the removing of this difficulty I shall not need to say as some learned men have done, That by *the Son of Man* is here to be understood any man, and that our Saviour is not particularly designed by it. That seems very hard, when our Saviour is so frequently in the Gospel called the *Son of man*. And especially when St. *Luke* reciting these words, does immediately before give him this very title to put the matter out of all doubt, *Luke* 12. 8, 9, 10. *Also I say unto you, whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the Angels of God: But he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the Angels of God.* Upon which it follows, *And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man it shall be*



*be forgiven him.* So that in all reason the Son of man is the very same person that had this Title given him in the foregoing words, *viz.* our blessed Saviour. So that I take it for granted, that by speaking against the Son of man is here meant speaking against Christ: And by speaking against him, as it is opposed to speaking against the Holy Ghost, is meant all those reproaches and contumelies which they cast upon our Saviour's person, without reflecting upon that divine power which he testified by his miracles. As their reproaching him with the meanness of his birth, *Is not this the Carpenters son?* with the place of it (as they supposed) *out of Galilee ariseth no Prophet*: Their reflecting upon his life, saying that he was *a wine-bibber and a glutton, a friend of Publicans and sinners*; with many other calumnies which they maliciously cast upon him.

But by speaking against the Holy Ghost is meant their blaspheming and reproaching that divine power whereby he wrought his miracles: which though it did at last likewise reflect upon our Saviour's person, yet it was an immediate reflection upon the Holy Ghost, and a blaspheming of him; and therefore it is called speaking  
against

against the Holy Ghost, by way of distinction or opposition to the other calumnies which they used against our Saviour; which were proper blasphemies and reproaches of his person, but not of the Holy Ghost also, as this was. This seems to me to be the true difference here intended by our Saviour between *speaking against the Son of man, and speaking against the Holy Ghost*. Let us in the

II. *Second* place, enquire wherein the nature of this sin or blasphemy against the Holy Ghost doth consist. And the true nature of this sin, though it be so plainly to be gathered from our Saviour's description of it, yet I know not how, a great many learned men have made a hard shift to mistake it. Some have made it to be *final Impenitency*, because that is unpardonable. But why that rather than any thing else that is bad should be called a blaspheming of the Holy Ghost, it is hard to give a reason. Others have placed the nature of it in *a wilfull and obstinate opposition of the truth*: which though it be a great sin, and included in the sin here spoken of, or a concomitant of it; yet is there great reason to believe that this is not all that is here meant by it. Others would



would have it to consist in a malicious opposition of the Truth, *when men know and are convinced that it is the Truth*; which is a great sin indeed, if ever any man were guilty of it; but it is a great Question whether humane nature be capable of it. A man may indeed have sufficient means of conviction, and yet not be convinc'd; but it is hardly imaginable that a man should oppose the truth, when he is actually convinc'd that it is the truth. And to mention no more, others think it to consist in a renouncing of the truth *for fear of suffering*; which made *Francis Spira* to think that he had committed this sin.

But with all due respect to the judgment of others, I cannot think that any of these is the sin our Saviour here describes. As I shall endeavour plainly to shew, by considering the occasion of our Saviour's mentioning of it, the persons upon whom our Saviour chargeth this sin, and upon what account he chargeth them with it.

At the 22 *ver.* of this *Chapter* there was brought to our Saviour *one possessed with a Devil, blind and dumb, and he healed him. Upon this the people were amazed, and said, is not this the Son of David?* that is, the *Messias*. The Pharisees hearing this, with great bitterness and contempt said, *This fellow*

*fellow-doth not cast out Devils but by Beelzebub the Prince of Devils. Upon this our Saviour represents to them the unreasonableness of this calumny; and that upon these two considerations: 1<sup>st</sup>. That it was very unlikely that the Devil should lend him this power to use it against himself. Every Kingdom divided against it self is brought to desolation: and every City or House divided against it self shall not stand. And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself, how shall then his Kingdom stand? 2<sup>dly</sup>, Our Saviour tells them, they might with as much reason attribute all miracles to the Devil. There were those among themselves who cast out Devils in the name of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (as Origen, and Tertullian, and Justin Martyr tells us.) Of these our Saviour speaks, and asks the Pharisees by what power they cast them out. But they acknowledged that these did it by the power of God, and there was no cause but their malice why they should not have acknowledged that he did it likewise by the same power, ver. 27. If I by Beelzebub cast out Devils, by whom do your Children cast them out? therefore they shall be your judges; that is, this may be sufficient to convince you of malice to me: But if I*  
*cast*



cast out Devils by the Spirit of God, then the Kingdom of God is come unto you, that is, the *Messias* is come; because he wrought these and other miracles to prove that he was the *Messias*. And then it follows, *Wherefore I say unto you, all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men, but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men.*

So that the *Pharisees* are the persons charged with this sin or blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. And their blasphemy was plainly this, that when he cast out Devils by the Spirit of God they said he did it by the power of the Devil; they maliciously ascribed these works of the Holy Ghost to the Devil.

And that this is the ground why our Saviour chargeth them with this sin against the Holy Ghost is yet more plain from St. Mark, - Mark 3. 28, 29, 30. *Verily I say unto you, all sins shall be forgiven unto the Sons of men, and blasphemies wherewithsoever they shall blaspheme: but he that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost, hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation; because they said he hath an unclean Spirit.* That is, because the *Pharisees* charged him to be a Magician and to have a familiar Spirit, by whose assistance he did those

those works, when in truth he did them by the Spirit of God therefore our Saviour declares them guilty of this sin of blaspheming the Holy Ghost, which should never be forgiven.

So that the nature of this sin did consist in a most malicious opposition to the utmost evidence that could be given to the truth of any Religion. Our blessed Saviour to shew that he was sent by God, and came from him wrought miracles, such as did plainly evidence a Divine power and presence accompanying him. For in St. *Luke* he is said to do them *by the finger of God*, *Luke* 11. 20. *By the finger of God*, that is, to do such things as were undeniable evidence of the Divine power and presence. And this is the utmost testimony that God ever gave to any person that was sent by him. And the *Pharisees* were eye-witnesses of those miracles which our Saviour wrought, so that they could not deny them : Yet such was their opposition to him and his Doctrine, that though they saw these things done by him, and could not deny the reality of them, yet rather than they would own him to be the *Messias* and his Doctrine to come from God, they most maliciously and unreasonably ascribed them to the power of the Devil.



Devil. And this was the blasphemy which they were guilty of against the Holy Ghost. And herein lay the greatness of their sin, in resisting the evidence of those miracles which were so plainly wrought by the Holy Ghost; and which though themselves saw, yet they maliciously imputed them to the Devil, rather than they would be convinced by them. And this is so very plain, that hardly any man that considers our Saviour's discourse upon this occasion can otherwise determine the nature of this sin, especially if he do but attend to those remarkable words which I cited before (*Mark 3. 29.*) *but he that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation; because they said he hath an unclean spirit.* I come now to the

III. *Third* thing I propounded, *namely*, in what sense this sin is here said to be peculiarly *unpardonable*? For this sin our Saviour positively affirms to be in this different from all other sins, that it is capable of no pardon: *I say unto you, all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men:* And to shew what he means by the not forgiving

ving of it, he tells us, that eternal punishment shall follow it in the other World. *Whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall never be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in the world to come.* Which St. Mark expresseth more plainly, that it shall bring those who are guilty of it to *eternal damnation*, Mark 3. 29. *He that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is liable to eternal damnation.* So that when our Saviour says, *it shall never be forgiven, neither in this world nor in the world to come*, he does not intend to insinuate that some sins which are not forgiven in this world may be forgiven in the other; but in these words he either alludes to the opinion of the *Jews* concerning the effect of the highest excommunication, the sentence whereof they held not to be reversible, neither in this world nor the other; or else the reason of this expression may probably be to meet with a common and false opinion amongst the *Jews*, which was, that some sins which are not pardoned to men in this life may by sacrifices be expiated in the other; and therefore he says it shall never be forgiven, neither  
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in this world nor the other. And St. Mark more plainly, that those who are guilty of it shall *never have forgiveness*, but *be liable to eternal damnation*. So that our Saviour's meaning seems plainly to be this, that this sin is altogether incapable of forgiveness. I know some have endeavoured to mollifie this matter, but (I think) without sufficient reason. *Grotius* understands the words *comparatively*, that any sort of sin shall sooner be forgiven than this against the Holy Ghost; and that our Saviour onely intended to express the greatness and heinousness of this sin above others, in which respect the pardon of it would be more difficult than of any other sin; but yet that the case of such a person is not absolutely desperate: But if our Saviour had intended to say that this sin was absolutely unpardonable, I would fain know how could he have expressed the matter in higher and fuller words? Dr. *Hammond* mollifies the words another way, that this sin shall never be pardoned but upon a *particular repentance* for it: As if our Saviour's meaning was that a general repentance, which was sufficient for sins of Ignorance, would not be sufficient in this case, but there must be a particular repentance for

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ving of it, he tells us, that eternal punishment shall follow it in the other World. *Whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall never be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in the world to come.* Which St. Mark expresseth more plainly, that it shall bring those who are guilty of it to *eternal damnation*, Mark 3. 29. *He that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is liable to eternal damnation.* So that when our Saviour says, *it shall never be forgiven, neither in this world nor in the world to come*, he does not intend to insinuate that some sins which are not forgiven in this world may be forgiven in the other; but in these words he either alludes to the opinion of the *Jews* concerning the effect of the highest excommunication, the sentence whereof they held not to be reversible, neither in this world nor the other; or else the reason of this expression may probably be to meet with a common and false opinion amongst the *Jews*, which was, that some sins which are not pardoned to men in this life may by sacrifices be expiated in the other; and therefore he says it shall never be forgiven, neither  
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in this world nor the other. And St. *Mark* more plainly, that those who are guilty of it shall *never have forgiveness*, but *be liable to eternal damnation*. So that our Saviour's meaning seems plainly to be this, that this sin is altogether incapable of forgiveness. I know some have endeavoured to mollifie this matter, but (I think) without sufficient reason. *Grotius* understands the words *comparatively*, that any sort of sin shall sooner be forgiven than this against the Holy Ghost; and that our Saviour onely intended to express the greatness and heinousness of this sin above others, in which respect the pardon of it would be more difficult than of any other sin; but yet that the case of such a person is not absolutely desperate: But if our Saviour had intended to say that this sin was absolutely unpardonable, I would fain know how could he have expressed the matter in higher and fuller words? Dr. *Hammond* mollifies the words another way, that this sin shall never be pardoned but upon a *particular repentance* for it: As if our Saviour's meaning was that a general repentance, which was sufficient for sins of Ignorance, would not be sufficient in this case, but there must be a particular repentance for

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it without which it would never be pardoned. But this is by no means agreeable to the scope of our Saviour's discourse: Because he plainly intends to difference this from all other sorts of sins, I say unto you, *all manner of sin and blasphemy* shall be forgiven unto men. But according to this interpretation our Saviour must mean that all other sins would be forgiven upon a general repentance; which is not true, for there are many other sins besides sins of Ignorance, there are wilfull and heinous sins such as wilfull murder and adultery and blasphemy, (that onely excepted which is against the *Holy Ghost*) and the like gross sins, which all Divines hold shall not be forgiven but upon a *particular repentance*. So that this interpretation does not sufficiently difference this sin from all other sorts of sins, which is yet very plain our Saviour intended to do. It remains then that these words must in all reason be understood absolutely, that the persons that are guilty of this great sin shall never have it forgiven to them. And it may be this will not seem so harsh when we have considered in the

IV. *Fourth* place, *how* it comes to pass that this sin is above all others incapable of



of pardon: And that, upon these two accounts.

*First*, Because by this sin men resist their last remedy, and oppose the best and utmost means of their conviction. What can God be imagined to do more to convince a man of a Divine Revelation, or of the truth of any Doctrine or message that comes from him than to work miracles to this purpose. And what greater assurance can men have that miracles are wrought, than to be eye-witnesses of them themselves? And if men will resist such evidence, what can God do more for their satisfaction? If when men see plain miracles wrought they will say that it is not the power of God that does them, but the power of the Devil: And if when men see the Devils cast out, they will say that the Devil conspires against himself, this is to outface the Sun at Noon-day, and there is no way left to convince such perverse persons of the truth of any Divine Revelation. So that there is no remedy but such persons must continue in their opposition to the truth. For this is such a sin as does in its own nature shut out and prevent all remedy. And he that thus perversely and maliciously opposeth the truth, must upon the same grounds

unavoidably continue in his opposition to it ; because there is nothing left to be done for his conviction, more than is already done. If God should send a person immediately from Heaven to him to convince him of his error, he can give him no greater testimony that he comes from God than miracles : And if when God enables that person to work these by the power of his Spirit, this man will obstinately impute them to the power of the Devil, he defeats all the imaginable means of his own conviction. So that it is no wonder if that sin be unpardonable, which resists the last and utmost means which God hath ever yet thought fit to use to bring men to repentance and salvation. And if God were willing to reveal himself and the way to pardon and salvation to such a one, he doth by this very temper and disposition render himself incapable of being satisfied and convinced concerning any divine Revelation.

*Secondly*, Because this sin is of that high nature that God is therefore justly provoked to withdraw his grace from such persons ; and, it is probable, resolved so to do ; without which grace they will continue impenitent. There is no doubt but God if he will, can work so powerfully



fully upon the minds of men by his Grace and Spirit, as to convince the most obstinate: and supposing them to be convinced and repent, it cannot be denied but that they would be forgiven. And therefore when our Saviour here says they shall not be forgiven, it is reasonable to suppose that he means that when persons are come to that degree of obstinacy and malice God will (as justly he may) withdraw his grace from them: *His spirit will not strive with them* to overcome their obstinacy, but will leave them to the byass of their own perverse and malicious minds; which will still engage them in a further opposition to the truth, and finally sink them in perdition. So that being deserted by God, and for want of the necessary help and aid of his grace (justly withdrawn from them) continuing finally impenitent, they become incapable of forgiveness both in this world and that which is to come. And there is nothing that can seem harsh or unreasonable in this, to those who grant (as I think all men do) that God may be so provoked by men as justly to withdraw his grace from them in this life, that grace which is necessary to their repentance. And surely if any provocation be likely to do

it, this cannot be denied to be of all others the greatest, obstinately and maliciously to oppose the utmost evidence that God ever gave to the truth of any Doctrine revealed by him. And of this the *Pharisees*, who are here charged with this sin against the Holy Ghost, were notoriously guilty in resisting the clear evidence of our Saviour's miracles.

And thus I have done with the *four* things I propounded to enquire into from these words, *namely*, The difference between speaking against the Son of man, and speaking against the Holy Ghost; wherein the nature of this sin or blasphemy against the Holy Ghost doth consist; and in what sense this sin is said to be unpardonable; and upon what account it is so, *namely*, because men by this sin resist their last remedy, and oppose the best and utmost means of their conviction: And because it may reasonably be supposed that upon a provocation of this high nature, God may and is resolved to withdraw that grace from such persons which is necessary to their repentance, without which their sin remains for ever unpardonable.

All that now remains is to make this discourse some way or other usefull to our selves.



selves. And it may very well serve to these *two* purposes. *First*, to comfort some very good and pious persons who are liable to despair out of an apprehension that they have committed *this sin*. *Secondly*, to caution others against the approaches to it.

I. *First*, To comfort some very good and pious persons, who are liable to despair upon an apprehension that they have committed this great and unpardonable sin; and consequently are utterly incapable of ever being restored to the mercy and favour of God. And nothing can be more for the comfort of such persons than to understand aright what the nature of this sin was, and wherein the heinousness of it doth consist; which I have endeavoured to manifest. And if this be the nature of it which I have declared, as it seems very plain that it is, then I cannot see how any person *now* is likely to be in those circumstances as to be capable of committing it. And being a sin of so heinous a nature, and declared by our Saviour to be absolutely unpardonable, there is no reason to extend it beyond the case to which our Saviour applies it; which was the resisting of the evidence of the miracles which were wrought for the truth of Christianity.

stianity, by those who were eye-witnesses of them, *that is*, by those who had the utmost assurance of them that humane nature is capable of. And not onely a bare resistance of that evidence, but with a very malicious circumstance, so as to impute those works which were wrought by the *Holy Ghost* to the power of the *Devil*. This was the case of the *Pharisees* whom our Saviour chargeth with this sin. And no body hath warrant to extend this sin any further than this case; and without good warrant it would be the most uncharitable thing in the world to extend it any further.

That which comes nearest to it, both in the heinousness of the crime and the unpardonableness of it, is *total Apostasie from Christianity* after the embracing of it, and full conviction of the truth of it. And this the Scripture seems to place, if not in the same rank, yet very near to it. And of this the Apostle speaks very often in the *Epistle* to the *Hebrews* under the name of *unbelief*, and *sin* by way of eminence, as being the great *sin* that Christians were in danger of falling into, called in that *Epistle* (*Heb. 12. 1.*) ἡ ἐν μέλει ἁμαρτία, the *sin* which Christians, by reason of the *circumstances* they were then in, were



were especially subject to: And he parallels it with the case of the *Jews* in the wilderness, concerning whom *God* swore that they should not enter into his rest, namely, the earthly *Canaan* which was a type of *Heaven*, Chap. 3. ver. 18. And Chap. 6. ver. 4, 5, 6. more expressly; For it is impossible that those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the *Holy Ghost*, and have tasted the good word of *God*, and the powers of the world to come, if they should fall away, to renew them again to repentance. Where by impossible, the least that can be meant is that it is extremely difficult for such persons to recover themselves by repentance. And 'tis observable that those persons are said to have been partakers of the *Holy Ghost*, by which is meant that they were endued with a power of miracles by the *Holy Ghost*, or were under the conviction of them as having seen them wrought by others. So that this Apostasie may be said in that respect to be a sin against the *Holy Ghost*. So likewise, Chap. 10. ver. 26. If we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth (that is, if we apostatize from Christianity after we have embraced the profession of it, as appears plainly from the

the scope of the Apostles discourse ) *there remains no more sacrifice for sin*: which expression declares this sin either to be unpardonable, or something very like it. And at the 29. vers. Those persons are said to *tread under foot the Son of God, and to do despite unto the Spirit of Grace*. Which signifies that the sin there spoken of is more immediately committed against the Holy Spirit of God. St. Peter likewise declares the great danger of this sin, 2 Pet. 2. 20. *If after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning*. St. John likewise seems to speak of this sin of Apostacy, and to call it *a sin unto death*: Discouraging Christians rather, from praying for those who were fallen into it; which gives great suspicion that he looked upon it as hardly pardonable, 1 Joh. 5. 16. *If any man see his brother sin a sin not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for those that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death, I do not say that he shall pray for it*. Now that by the *sin unto death* the Apostle here means Apostacy from the Christian Religion to the Heathen Idolatry seems extremely probable from what



what follows, ver. 18. *We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not, but keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not*; that is, he preserveth himself from Idolatry which the Devil had seduced the world into, ver. 19. *And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness, ἐν τῷ πονηρῷ, in the wicked one*; that is, is under the power of the Devil: *And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us understanding to know him that is true*; that is, to distinguish between the true God and Idols. And then it follows, *this is the true God, and eternal life: Little Children keep yourselves from Idols*. Which last caution is a key to the understanding of all the rest, and makes it very probable that the sin unto death is Apostacy from Christianity unto Idolatry: Otherwise it is hard to imagine how the last clause comes in, *Little Children, keep yourselves from Idols*. And this is that sin which of all other approacheth nearest to this *sin against the Holy Ghost* which our Saviour speaks of, and concerning the pardonableness of which the Scripture seems to speak very doubtfully. But if it were of the same unpardonable nature, yet this can be no trouble to those persons I am speaking of, who

who cannot but know themselves to be far enough from the guilt of this sin.

As for those other sins which by some are taken to be the sins against the Holy Ghost, they are either such as perhaps no man is capable of committing, as a *malicious opposition to the truth when I am convinced and know it to be the truth*: For this seems to be a contradiction, to know any thing to be the truth and to believe it to be so, and yet to oppose it; because the understanding can no more oppose truth as truth, than the will can refuse good as good. Or else, they are such as no man can know he is guilty of in this life; as, *final impenitency*, which supposeth a man to live and die without repentance. Or else, such as I think no good man is incident to; as, a *malicious and perverse opposing of the truth after sufficient means of conviction*. However, none of these are that which the Scripture describes to be the *sin against the Holy Ghost*, as I have already shewn.

But still there are two things which usually trouble honest and well-meaning persons, but are rather the effects of Melancholy than any reasonable ground of trouble. Some think that every *deliberate sin* against knowledge, and after conviction,



on, is *the sin against the Holy Ghost*. This is acknowledged to be a very great aggravation of sin, and such as calls for a great and particular repentance; but does by no means render a man incapable of forgiveness. Others are troubled with *blasphemous thoughts*, and those they think to be *the sin against the Holy Ghost*. But this is generally the meer effect of melancholy, and the persons that are troubled with these black thoughts are no ways consenting to them, but they rise in their minds perfectly against their wills and without any approbation of theirs: And in this case they are so far from being the unpardonable sin, that I hope, yea and verily believe, they are no sins at all, but the meer effects of a bodily distemper; and no more imputed to us than the wild and idle ravings of a man in a frenzy or a fever: And God forbid that the natural effects of a bodily disease should bring guilt upon our souls. So that these persons have reason enough for comfort; but the misery is, their present distemper renders them incapable of it.

2. *Secondly*, The other use I would make of this Discourse is, to caution men against the *degrees and approaches* of this sin. For if the sin against the Holy Ghost be of such  
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a high nature and so unpardonable, then all approaches to it are very dreadfull. Such as are, *profane scoffing at Religion* and the *Holy Spirit* of God which dwells in good men: *Abuse of the holy Scriptures*, which were indited by the Spirit of God: *Perverse Infidelity*, notwithstanding all the evidence which we have for the Truth of Christianity, and sufficient assurance of the Miracles wrought for the confirmation of it brought down to us by credible History, though we were not eye-witnesses of them: *Obstinacy in a sinfull and vicious course*, notwithstanding all the motives and arguments of the Gospel to perswade men to repentance. *Sinning against the clear conviction of our Consciences*, and the *motions and suggestions of God's Holy Spirit* to the contrary: *Malicious opposing of the truth* when the Arguments for it are very plain and evident to any impartial and unprejudiced mind, and when he that opposeth the Truth hath no clear satisfaction in his own mind to the contrary, but suffers himself to be furiously and headily carried on in his opposition to it. These are all sins of a very high nature, and of the nearest affinity with this great and unpardonable sin, of any that can easily be instanced in. And though God, to encourage the  
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repentance of men, have not declared them unpardonable, yet they are great provocations; and if they be long continued in, we know not how soon God may withdraw his grace from us, and suffer us to be *hardned through the deceitfulness of sin.*

Be ready then to entertain the truth of God whenever it is fairly propounded to thee, and with such evidence as thou art willing to accept in other matters where thou hast no prejudice nor interest to the contrary. Do nothing contrary to thy known duty, but be carefull in all things to obey the Convictions of thine own Conscience, and to yield to the good motions and suggestions of God's *Holy Spirit* who works secretly upon the minds of men, and inspires us many times gently with good thoughts and inclinations, and is griev'd when we do not comply with them; and after many repulses will at last withdraw himself from us, and leave us to be assaulted by the temptations of the Devil, and to be hurried away by our own lusts into ruine and perdition.

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ACTS X. 38.

---Who went about doing good.

**W**Hen Almighty God designed the Reformation of the World and the restoring of Man to the Image of God, the Pattern after which he was first made, he did not think it enough to give us the most perfect Laws of holiness and vertue ; but hath likewise set before us a living Pattern, and a familiar Example to excite and encourage us, to go before us and shew us the way, and as it were to lead us by the hand in the obedience of those Laws. Such is the Sovereign Authority of God over men that he might, if he had pleased, have onely given us a Law written with his own hand, as he did to the people of *Israel* from Mount *Sinai*: but such is his

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Goodness, that he hath sent a great Embassadour from Heaven to us, *God manifested in the Flesh*, to declare and interpret his will and pleasure; and not onely so, but to fulfill that Law himself the observation whereof he requires of us. The bare Rules of a good life are a very dead and ineffectual thing in comparison of a living Example, which shews us the possibility and practicableness of our Duty; both that it may be done, and how to do it. Religion indeed did always consist in an Imitation of God, and in our resemblance of those excellencies which shine forth in the best and most perfect Being; but we may imitate him now with much greater ease and advantage, since God was pleased to become man on purpose to shew us how men may become like to God. And this is one great end for which the Son of God came into the world, and *was made flesh, and dwelt among us*, and conversed so long and familiarly with mankind; that in his own Person and Life he might give us the Example of all that holiness and vertue which his Laws require of us. And as he was in nothing liker the Son of God than in being and doing good, so is he in nothing a fitter Pattern for our imitation than in that excellent

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Character given of him here in the Text that *He went about doing good.*

In which words two things offer themselves to our consideration.

First, Our Saviour's great Work and Business in the World, which was to *do good*: ὃς διήλθεν ἐνεργητῶν, who employed himself in being a Benefactor to Mankind. This refers more especially to his healing the bodily diseases and infirmities of men. *God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with Power; who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the Devil.* Intimating to us by this instance of his doing good, that he who took so much pains to rescue mens Bodies from the power and possession of the Devil would not let their Souls remain under his tyranny. But though the Text instanceth onely in one particular, yet this general expression of *doing good* comprehends all those several ways whereby he was beneficial to mankind.

Secondly, Here is his **Diligence and Industry** in this work, *He went about doing good*; he made it the great business and constant employment of his life. I shall propound to you the Pattern of our Saviour in both these particulars.

I. His great Work and Business in the world was to *do good*. The most pleasant and delightfull, the most happy and glorious work in the world. It is a work of a large extent, and of an universal influence; and comprehends in it all those ways whereby we may be usefull and beneficial to one another. And indeed it were pity that so good a thing should be confined within narrow bounds and limits. It reacheth to the Souls of men, and to their Bodies; and is conversant in all those ways and kinds whereby we may serve the Temporal or Spiritual good of our Neighbour, and promote his present and his future happiness. What our Blessed Saviour did in this kind, and we in imitation of him ought to do, I shall reduce to these two Heads. *First*, Doing good to the Souls of men and endeavouring to promote their spiritual and eternal happiness. *Secondly*, The procuring of their Temporal good and contributing as much as may be to their happiness in this present life.

I. Doing good to the *Souls* of men and endeavouring to promote their *spiritual* and *eternal* happiness, by good Instruction, and by good Example.

First,



First, By good *Instruction*. And under Instruction I comprehend all the means of bringing men to the knowledge of their duty, and exciting them to the practice of it; by instructing their Ignorance, and removing their Prejudices, and rectifying their Mistakes, by Perswasion and by Reproof; and by making lasting provision for the promoting of these ends.

By instructing mens Ignorance. And this is a duty which every man owes to another as he hath opportunity, but especially to those who are under our care and charge, our Children and Servants and near Relations, those over whom we have a special authority and a more immediate influence. This our Blessed Saviour made his great work in the world, to instruct all sorts of persons in the things which concerned the Kingdom of God and to direct them in the way to eternal Happiness; by publick teaching, and by private conversation, and by taking occasion from the common occurrences of humane life, and every object that presented it self to him, to instill good counsel into men and to raise their minds to the consideration of divine and heavenly things. And though this was our Saviour's great Employment, and is theirs more particu-

larly whose Office it is to teach others ; yet every man hath private opportunities of instructing others, by admonishing them of their duty, and by directing them to the best means and helps of knowledge ; such as are Books of Piety and Religion, with which they that are rich may furnish those who are unable to provide them for themselves.

And then by removing mens Prejudices against the Truth, and rectifying their Mistakes. This our Saviour found very difficult ; the generality of those with whom he had to do being strongly prejudiced against Him and his Doctrine by false Principles, which they had taken in by Education and been trained up to by their Teachers. And therefore he used a great deal of meekness in instructing those that opposed themselves, and exercised abundance of patience in bearing with the infirmities of men, and their dulness and slowness of capacity to receive the Truth.

And this is great Charity, to consider the inveterate Prejudices of men ; especially those which are rooted in education, and which men are confirmed in by the reverence they bear to those that have been their Teachers. And great Allowance  
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is to be given to men in this case, and time to bethink themselves and to consider better. For no man that is in an Error thinks he is so; and therefore if we go violently to rend their Opinions from them they will but hold them so much the faster, but if we have patience to unrip them by degrees they will at last fall in pieces of themselves.

And when this is done, the way is open for Counsel and Perswasion. And this our Saviour administred in a most powerfull and effectual manner, by encouraging men to Repentance, and by representing to them the infinite advantages of obeying his Laws, and the dreadfull and dangerous consequences of breaking of them. And these are arguments fit to work upon Mankind, because there is something within us that consents to the equity and reasonableness of God's Laws. So that whenever we perswade men to their duty, how backward soever they may be to the practice of it being strongly addicted to a contrary course, yet we have this certain advantage that we have their Consciences and the most inward sense of their minds on our side, bearing witness that what we counsel and perswade them to is for their good.

And if need be we must add Reproof to Counsel. This our Saviour did with great freedom, and sometimes with sharpness and severity, according to the condition of the persons he had to deal withall. But because of his great Authority, being a *Teacher* immediately *sent from God*, and of his intimate knowledge of the hearts of men, he is not a Pattern to us in all the circumstances of discharging this duty; which, if any other, requires great prudence and discretion if we intend to do good, the onely end to be aimed at in it. For many are fit to be reprov'd whom yet every man is not fit to reprove; and in that case we must get it done by those that are fit, and great regard must be had to the time and other circumstances of doing it, so as it may most probably have its effect.

I will mention but one way of Instruction more, and that is by making lasting provision for that purpose: as by founding Schools of Learning, especially to teach the poor to reade, which is the Key of Knowledge; by building of Churches and endowing them; by buying or giving in Improvements, or the like. These are large and lasting ways of teaching and instructing others, which will  
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continue when we are dead and gone; as it is said of *Abel*, that *being dead he yet speaks*. And this our Saviour virtually did by appointing his Apostles after he had left the World to go *and teach all Nations*, and ordering a constant Succession of Teachers in his Church to instruct men in the Christian Religion, together with an honourable Maintenance for them. This we cannot do in the way that he did who had *all power in heaven and earth*, but we may be subservient to this Design in the ways that I have mentioned. Which I humbly commend to the consideration of those whom God hath blessed with great Estates and made capable of effecting such great works of Charity.

Secondly, Another way of doing good to the Souls of men is by good *Example*. And this our Blessed Saviour was in the utmost perfection. For he *fulfilled all righteousness, had no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth*. And this we should endeavour to be, as far as the frailty of our nature and imperfection of our present state will suffer. For good example is an unspeakable benefit to Mankind, and hath a secret power and influence upon those with whom we converse to form them into the same disposition and manners. It  
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is a living Rule, that teacheth men without trouble, and lets them see their faults without open reproof and upbraiding. Besides that it adds great weight to a man's counsel and perswasion when we see that he adviseth nothing but what he does, nor exacts any thing from others from which he himself desires to be excused. As on the contrary, nothing is more cold and insignificant than good counsel from a bad man, one that does not obey his own precepts nor follow the advice which he is so forward to give to others.

These are the several ways of doing good to the *Souls* of men, wherein we who are the Disciples of the Blessed *Jesus* ought in imitation of his Example to exercise ourselves according to our several capacities and opportunities. And this is the noblest Charity, and the greatest kindness that can be shewn to humane nature; it is in the most excellent sense to *give eyes to the blind*, to *set the prisoners at liberty*, to rescue men out of the saddest slavery and captivity, and to *save Souls from death*. And it is the most lasting and durable benefit, because it is to do men good to all eternity.

2. The other way of being beneficial to others is, by procuring their *Temporal* good



good and contributing to their happiness in this present life. And this, in subordination to our Saviour's great design of bringing men to eternal Happiness, was a great part of his business and employment in this world. He went about *healing all manner of sicknesses and diseases*, and rescuing the Bodies of men from the power and possession of the Devil.

And though we cannot be beneficial to men in that miraculous manner that he was ; yet we may be so in the use of ordinary means: We may comfort the afflicted, and vindicate the oppressed, and do a great many acts of Charity which our Saviour by reason of his poverty could not do without a Miracle : We may supply the necessities of those that are in want, *feed the hungry, and cloath the naked* and *visit the sick*, and minister to them such comforts and remedies as they are not able to provide for themselves : We may take a Child that is poor and destitute of all advantages of Education and bring him up in the knowledge and fear of God, and without any great expence put him into a way wherein by his diligence and industry he may arrive to a considerable fortune in the world, and be able afterwards to relieve hundreds of others. Men  
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glory in raising great and magnificent Structures, and find a secret pleasure to see Sets of their own planting to grow up and flourish: But surely it is a greater and more glorious work to build up a Man, to see a Youth of our own planting, from the small beginnings and advantages we have given him to grow up into a considerable fortune, to take root in the world and to shoot up to such a height and spread his branches so wide, that we who first planted him may our selves find comfort and shelter under his shadow. We may many times with a small liberality shore up a Family that is ready to fall, and struggles under such necessities that it is not able to support it self. And if our minds were as great as sometimes our estates are, we might do great and publick works of a general and lasting advantage, and for which many Generations to come might call us blessed. And those who are in the lowest condition may do great good to others by their Prayers, if they themselves be as good as they ought. *For the fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.* The intercession of those who are in favour with God ( as all good men are ) are not vain wishes, but many times effectual to procure that good for others.



others which their own endeavours could never have effected and brought about.

I have done with the First thing. The great Work and Business which our Blessed Saviour had to do in the world, and that was to *do good*. I proceed to the

II. Second thing contained in the Text, Our Saviour's Diligence and Industry in this work, *He went about doing good*. He made it the great business and constant employment of his life, he travelled from one place to another to seek out opportunities of being usefull and beneficial to Mankind. And this will fully appear if we briefly consider these following particulars :

First, How unwearied our blessed Saviour was in doing good. He made it his onely business, and spent his whole life in it. He was not onely ready to do good to those that came to him and gave him opportunity for it and besought him to do it, but went himself from one place to another to seek out objects to exercise his Charity upon. He went to those who could not, and to those who would not come to him; for so it is written of him, *He came to seek and to save that which was lost*. He was contented to spend whole  
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days in this work, to live in a crowd and to be almost perpetually oppressed with company; and when his Disciples were moved at the rudeness of the people in pressing upon him he rebuked their impatience, and, for the pleasure he took in doing good made nothing of the trouble and inconvenience that attended it.

Secondly, If we consider how much he denied himself in the chief comforts and conveniences of humane life that he might do good to others. He neglected the ordinary refreshments of nature, his meat and drink and sleep, that he might attend this work. He was at every bodies beck and disposal to do them good. When he was doing Cures in one place he was sent for to another, and he either went or sent healing to them, and did by his word at a distance what he could not come in person to do. Nay he was willing to deny himself in one of the dearest things in the world, his reputation and good name. He was contented to do good, though he was ill thought of and ill spoken of for it. He would not refuse to do good on the Sabbath-day, though he was accounted profane for so doing. He knew how scandalous it was among the *Jews* to keep company with *Publicans* and *Sinners*, and yet he



he would not decline so good a work for all the ill words they gave him for it.

Thirdly, If we consider the malicious opposition and sinister construction that his good deeds met withall. Never did so much goodness meet with so much enmity, *endure* so many affronts and so much *contradiction of Sinners*. This great Benefactor of Mankind was hated and persecuted as if he had been a publick Enemy. While he was instructing them in the meekest manner, they were ready to stone him for telling them the truth; and when the fame of his Miracles went abroad, though they were never so usefull and beneficial to mankind, yet upon this very account they conspire against him and seek to take away his life. Whatever he said or did, though never so innocent, never so excellent, had some bad interpretation put upon it, and the great and shining Vertues of his life were turned into Crimes and matter of accusation. For his casting out of Devils, he was called a Magician; for his endeavour to reclaim men from their Vices, *a Friend of Publicans and Sinners*; for his free and obliging Conversation, *a Wine-bibber and a Glutton*. All the benefits which he did to men, and the blessings which he so liberally

rally shed among the people, were construed to be a design of Ambition and Popularity, and done with an intention to move the people to Sedition, and to make himself a King: Enough to have discouraged the greatest goodness, and have put a damp upon the most generous mind, and to make it sick and weary of well-doing. For what more grievous than to have all the good one does ill interpreted, and the best actions in the world made matter of calumny and reproach?

And then lastly, If we consider how chearfully, notwithstanding all this, he persevered and continued in well-doing. It was not onely his business, but his delight; *I delight* (says he) *to do thy will, O my God.* The pleasure which others take in the most natural actions of life, in eating and drinking when they are hungry he took in doing good, it was *his meat and drink to do the will of his Father.* He plied this work with so much diligence as if he had been afraid he should have wanted time for it. *I must work the work of him that sent me, while it is day; the night cometh when no man can work.* And when he was approaching towards the hardest and most unpleasant part of his Service, but of all others the most beneficial to us,  
I mean



I mean his Death and Sufferings, he was not at ease in his mind till it was done; *How am I straitned ( says he ) till it be accomplished?* And just before his Suffering, with what Joy and Triumph does he reflect upon the good he had done in his life? *Father, I have glorified thee upon earth, and finished the work which thou hast given me to do.* What a blessed Pattern is here of diligence and industry in doing good? how fair and lovely a Copy for Christians to write after?

And now that I have set it before you, it will be of excellent use to these two purposes: To shew us our Defects; and to excite us to our Duty.

I. To shew us our Defects. How does this blessed Example upbraid those who live in a direct contradiction to it; who, instead of *going about doing good*, are perpetually intent upon doing mischief; who are wise and active to do evil, but to do good have no inclination, no understanding? And those likewise who, though they are far from being so bad, yet wholly neglect this blessed work of doing good? They think it very fair to do no evil, to hurt and injure no man: but if Preachers will be so unreasonable as to require more,

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and will never be satisfied till they have perswaded them out of their estate, and and to give to the poor till they have almost impoverish'd themselves, they desire to be excused from this importunity. But we are not so unreasonable neither. We desire to put them in mind, that to be charitable according to our power is an indispensable duty of Religion: that we are commanded not onely to abstain from evil, but to do good; and that our Blessed Saviour hath given us the example of both; he did not onely *do no sin*, but *he went about doing good*. And upon this nice point it was that the young rich man in the Gospel and his Saviour parted. He had *kept the Commandments from his youth, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not steal*: he had been very carefull of the negative part of Religion; But, when it came to parting with his Estate and *giving to the poor*, this he thought too hard a condition, and upon this he forsook our Saviour and forfeited the Kingdom of Heaven. And it is very considerable, and ought to be often and seriously thought upon, that our Saviour describing to us the Day of Judgment represents the great Judge of the world acquitting and condemning men according to the good which



which they had done, or neglected to do in ways of mercy and charity; for feeding the hungry, and cloathing the naked, and visiting the sick, or for neglecting to do these things: Than which nothing can more plainly and effectually declare to us the necessity of doing good in order to the obtaining eternal Happiness.

There are many indeed who do not altogether neglect the doing of this work, who yet do in a great measure prevent and hinder themselves from doing it as they ought, under a pretence of being employed about other Duties and parts of Religion. They are so taken up with the exercises of Piety and Devotion in private and publick, with Prayer, and reading and hearing Sermons, and preparing themselves for the Sacrament, that they have scarce any leisure to mind the doing of good and charitable offices to others: or if they have, they hope God will pardon his servants in this thing, and accept of their Piety and Devotion instead of all. But they ought to consider, that when these two parts of Religion come in competition, Devotion is to give way to Charity, *Mercy* being better than *Sacrifice*: That the great End of all the Duties of Religion, Prayer, and reading and hearing the Word of God,

and receiving the holy Sacrament, is to dispose and excite us to do good, to make us more ready and forward to every good work : and that it is the greatest mockery in the world, upon pretence of using the means of Religion to neglect the end of it; and because we are always preparing ourselves to do good, to think that we are for ever excused from doing any.

Others are taken up in contending for the Faith, and spend all their zeal and heat about some Controversies in Religion; and therefore they think it but reasonable that they should be excused from those meaner kind of Duties, because they serve God, as they imagine, in a higher and more excellent way; as those who serve the King in his Wars use to be exempted from Taxes and Offices. But do those men consider upon what kind of Duties more especially, our Blessed Saviour and his Apostles lay the great weight and stress of Religion? that it is to the Meek, and Mercifull, and Peaceable that our Saviour pronounceth Blessedness? that *pure Religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction? that the wisdom which is from above is full of mercy and good works?* These are the great and weighty things of Religion, which,



which, whatever else we do, ought not to be left undone. Do they consider, that a right Faith is wholly in order to a good Life, and is of no value any farther than it hath an influence upon it? so that whatever other Duties we may be obliged to, nothing can excuse us from this. How much better is it to do good, to be really usefull and beneficial to others, and how much more clearly and certainly our duty, than to quarrel about doubtfull and uncertain opinions? Were men Christians indeed, they would be so much delighted and taken up with this better work, (more acceptable to God, and more profitable to men) that they could not find leisure, or if they could, they could not find in their hearts to employ all their time and zeal about things which are at so great a distance from the life and heart of Religion, as most of those Questions are which Christians at this day contend and languish about. Were we possessed with the true spirit of Christianity, these would be but dry and insipid and tasteless things to us, in comparision of the blessed employment of doing good in a more real and substantial way. If the sincere love of God and our Neighbour were but once thoroughly kindled in our hearts, these pure and heavenly

flames would in a great measure extinguish the unchristian heats of dispute and contention; as Fires here below are ready to languish and go out, when the Sun in his full strength shines upon them.

II. But the hardest part of my task is yet behind, and it is strange it should be so; and that is to perswade us to the imitation of this blessed Example. Let us *go and do likewise; let the same mind be in us that was in Christ Jesus*; let us tread in the steps of the great God and the best Man that ever was, our Blessed Saviour, who *went about doing good*. Methinks the work it self is of that nature, that men should not need to be courted to it by perswasion, nor urged by importunity. The very proposal of the thing, and the Pattern which I have set before you, is temptation and allurements enough to a generous and well-disposed mind. But yet to inflame you the more to so good a work, be pleased to dwell with me a little upon these following Considerations:

First, It is an argument of a great and generous mind, to employ our selves in doing good, to extend our thoughts and care to the concernments of others, and to use our power and endeavours for their  
benefit



benefit and advantage; because it shews an inclination and desire in us to have others happy as well as our selves.

Those who are of a narrow and envious spirit, of a mean and sordid disposition, love to contract themselves within themselves, and like the *Hedgehog* to shoot out their quills at every one that comes near them. They take care of no body but themselves, and foolishly think their own Happiness the greater because they have it alone and to themselves. But the noblest and most heavenly dispositions think themselves happiest when others share with them in their happiness. Of all Beings God is the farthest removed from Envy, and the nearer any Creature approacheth to him in blessedness the farther is it off from this hellish quality and disposition. It is the temper of the Devil to grudge happiness to others, he envied that man should be in Paradise when He was cast out of Heaven.

Other Perfections are (as one says) of a more melancholick and solitary disposition, and shine brightest when they are alone, or attained to but by a few; once make them common and they lose their lustre. But it is the nature of goodness to communicate it self, and the farther it spreads the more glorious it is. God reckons it as

one of his most glorious Titles, as the brightest Gem in his Diadem, *The Lord mighty to save*. He delights not to shew his Sovereignty in ruining the Innocent and destroying helpless Creatures; but in rescuing them out of the jaws of Hell and Destruction. To the Devil belongs the Title of the *Destroyer*.

Without this quality of goodness all other Perfections would change their nature, and lose their excellency. Great Power and Wisdom would be terrible, and raise nothing but dread and suspicion in us: For Power without Goodness would be Tyranny and Oppression, and Wisdom would become Craft and Treachery. A Being endued with Knowledge and Power, and yet wanting Goodness, would be nothing else but an irresistible Evil, and an omnipotent Mischief. We admire Knowledge, and are afraid of Power, and suspect Wisdom; but we can heartily love nothing but Goodness, or such Perfections as are in conjunction with it. For Knowledge and Power may be in a nature most contrary to God's; the Devil hath these perfections in an excelling degree. When all is done, nothing argues a great and generous mind but onely Goodness; which is a propension and disposition to make others happy, and a readiness



ness to do them all the good offices we can.

Secondly, To do good is the most pleasant employment in the World. It is natural; and whatever is so is delightfull. We do like our selves whenever we relieve the wants and distresses of others. And therefore this Vertue among all other hath peculiarly entitled it self to the name of *Humanity*. We answer our own Nature, and obey our Reason, and shew our selves Men in shewing Mercy to the miserable. Whenever we consider the evils and afflictions of others, we do with the greatest reason collect our duty from our nature and inclination, and make our own wishes and desires and expectations from others a law and rule to our selves. And this is pleasant, to follow our nature, and to gratifie the importunate dictates of our own Reason. So that the benefits we do to others are not more welcome to them that receive them, than they are delightfull to us that do them. We ease our own nature and bowels, whenever we help and relieve those who are in want and necessity. As on the contrary, no man that hath not divested himself of humanity can be cruel and hard-hearted to others without feeling some pain in himself. There is no sensual pleasure in the world  
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comparable to the delight and satisfaction that a good man takes in doing good. This *Cato* in *Tully* boasts of as the great comfort and joy of his old age, *That nothing was more pleasant to him than the Conscience of a well-spent life, and the remembrance of many benefits and kindnesses done to others.* Sensual pleasures are not lasting, but presently vanish and expire: but that is not the worst of them, they leave a sting behind them, as the pleasure goes off.

----- *Succedit frigida cura.*

Sadness and melancholy come in the place of it, guilt and trouble and repentance follow it. But the pleasure of doing good remains after a thing is done, the thoughts of it lie easie in our minds, and the reflexion upon it afterwards does for ever minister joy and delight to us. In a word, that frame of mind which inclines us to do good is the very temper and disposition of happiness. *Solomon*, after all his experience of worldly pleasures, pitches at last upon this as the greatest felicity of humane life, and the onely good use that is to be made of a prosperous and plentiful fortune, *Eccl. 3. 12. I know that there is no good in them, but for a man to rejoyce and do good in his life.* And  
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a greater and a wiser than *Solomon* had said, that *it is more blessed to give than to receive.*

Thirdly, To employ our selves in doing good is to imitate the highest Excellency and Perfection. It is to be like God *who is good and doth good*, and to be like him in that which he esteems his greatest glory, and that is, his Goodness. It is to be like the Son of God who when he took our nature upon him, and lived in the World, *went about doing good.* It is to be like the blessed Angels, whose great employment it is to be *ministring spirits for the good of others.* To be charitable and helpfull and beneficial to others, is to be a good Angel and a Saviour and a God to men. And the Example of our blessed Saviour more especially, is the great Pattern which our Religion propounds to us. And we have all the reason in the world to be in love with it; because that very Goodness which it propounds to our imitation, was so beneficial to our selves: when we our selves feel and enjoy the happy effects of that good which he did in the world, this should mightily endear the Example to us, and make us forward to imitate that love and kindness to which we are indebted for so many blessings, and upon which all our hopes of happiness do depend.

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And there is this considerable difference between our Saviours Charity to us, and ours to others: He did all purely for our sakes and for our benefit, whereas all the good we do to others is a greater good done to our selves. They indeed are beholden to us for the kindness we do them, and we to them for the opportunity of doing it. Every ignorant person that comes in our way to be instructed by us, every sinner whom we reclaim, every poor man we relieve, is a happy opportunity of doing good to our selves, and of *laying up for our selves a good treasure against the time which is to come, that we may lay hold on eternal life.* By this principle the best and the happiest man that ever was governed his life and actions, esteeming it *a more blessed thing to give than to receive.*

Fourthly, This is one of the greatest and most substantial Duties of Religion; and next to the love and honour which we pay to God himself, the most acceptable service that we can perform to him. It is one half of the Law, and next to the first and great Commandment, and very like unto it: like to it in the excellency of its nature, and in the necessity of its obligation. For *this commandment we have from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also.* The first Commandment  
 excels



excels in the dignity of the object, but the Second hath the advantage in the reality of its effects. For *our righteousness extendeth not to God*, we can do him no real benefit; but our Charity to men is really usefull and beneficial to them. For which reason God is contented, in many cases, that the external Honour and Worship, which by his positive command he requires of us, should give way to that natural duty of Love and Mercy which we owe to one another. And to shew how great a value he puts upon Charity, he hath made it the great testimony of our Love to himself; and for want of it, rejects all other professions of love to him as false and insincere. *If any man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a lyar. For he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?*

Fifthly, This is that which will give us the greatest comfort when we come to die. It will then be no pleasure to men to reflect upon the greatest estates they have got, and the great places they have been advanced to, because they are leaving these things, and they will find them in no stead in the other world; *Riches profit not in the day of wrath*: But the conscience of well-doing will refresh our Souls even under the very pangs of death. With what contentment does a good man then

then look upon the good he hath done in his life? and with what confidence doth he look over into the other world, where he hath provided for himself *bags that wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not?* For though our estates will not follow us into the other World, our good works will; though we cannot carry our riches along with us, yet we may send them before us to make way for our reception into everlasting habitations. In short, works of Mercy and Charity will comfort us at the hour of death, and plead for us at the day of Judgment, and procure for us at the hands of a mercifull God a glorious recompence at the resurrection of the just. Which leads me to the

*Last* consideration I shall offer to you; which is the reward of doing good both in this world and the other. If we believe God himself, he hath made more particular and encouraging promises to this grace and vertue than to any other.

The advantages of it in This World are many and great. It is the way to derive a lasting blessing upon our estates. Acts of Charity are the best Deeds of Settlement. We gain the prayers and blessings of those to whom we extend our charity, and it is no small thing to have *the blessing of them that are ready to perish to come upon us.* For God  
hears



*hears the prayers of the destitute, and his ear is open to their Cry.* Charity is a great security to us in times of evil; and that not only from the special promise and providence of God, which are engaged to preserve from want those that relieve the necessities of others; but likewise from the nature of the thing, which makes way for its own reward in this world. He that is charitable to others provides a supply and retreat for himself in the day of distress: For he provokes mankind by his example to like tenderness towards him, and prudently bespeaks the commiseration of others against it comes to be his turn to stand in need of it. Nothing in this World makes a man more and surer Friends than Charity and Bounty, and such as will stand by us in the greatest troubles and dangers. *For a good man (says the Apostle) one would even dare to die.* 'Tis excellent counsel of the Son of Sirach; *Lay up thy treasure according to the Commandment of the Most High, and it shall bring thee more profit than gold. Shut up thy Alms in thy storehouse, and it shall deliver thee from all affliction: It shall fight for thee against thine enemies, better than a mighty Shield and strong Spear.* It hath sometimes happened, that the obligation that men have laid upon others by their Charity, hath in case of danger and extre-

extremity done them more kindness than all the rest of their Estate could do for them ; and their Alms have literally delivered them from death.

But what is all this to the endless and unspeakable Happiness of the Next life, where the returns of doing good will be vastly great beyond what we can now expect or imagine ! For God takes all the good we do to others as a debt upon himself, and he hath estate and treasure enough to satisfy the greatest obligations we can lay upon Him. So that we have the Truth, and Goodness, and Sufficiency of God for our security, that what we scatter and sow in this kind will grow up to a plentiful harvest in the other world : and that all our pains and expence in doing good for a few days will be recompenced and crowned with the Joys and Glories of Eternity.

F I N I S.

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